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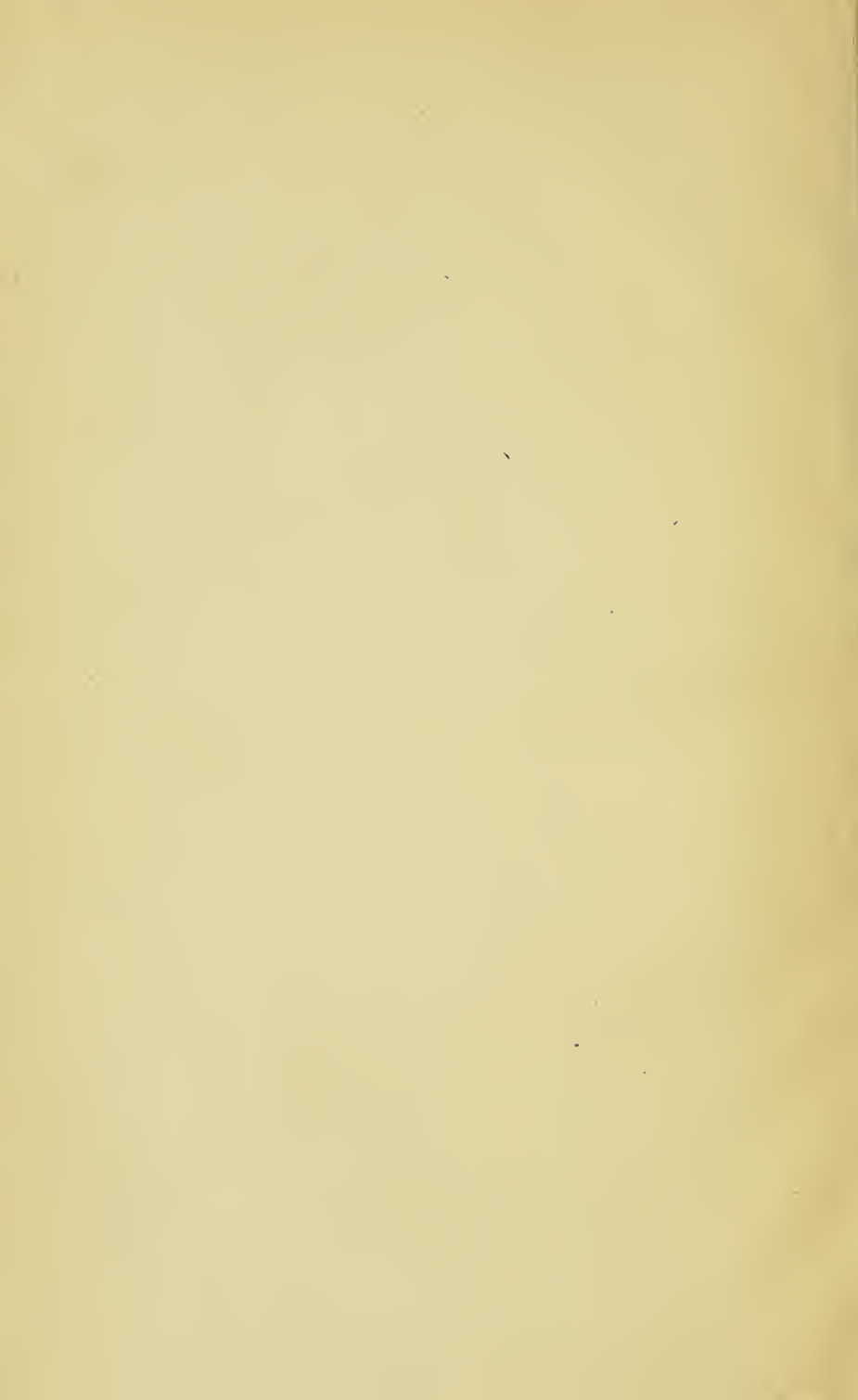
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THE
SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON



COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES

TO THE

SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA

REVELATION II. III.

BY

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ARCHBISHOP

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1886

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P R E F A C E .

IN PUBLISHING this volume I at length accomplish, however imperfectly, a wish which I have cherished for many years. During the time that I fulfilled my pleasant labours at King's College, I lectured three times to the theological students there on these seven Epistles; and the lectures to them delivered constitute the groundwork of the present volume, though much has been added, and some little changed, in the final revision which I have given to my work before venturing to challenge a larger audience for it. I confess that each time I have gone over these Epistles I have become more conscious of the manifold difficulties which they present; and more than once have been half disposed not to offer to others, in the way of interpretation of them, what has so little satisfied myself. I have not, however, held my hand. There has ever seemed to me a very useful warning contained in that German proverb which says, 'The best is oftentimes the enemy of the good;' and, without claiming for an instant that title of *good* for *my* book, I do not doubt that

many a good book has remained unwritten, or, perhaps, being written, has remained unpublished, because there floated before the mind's eye of the author, or possible author, the ideal of a better or a best, which has put him out of all conceit with his good; meanwhile some other, having no ideal at all before him, either to stimulate or to repress, steps in and poorly fills the place which the other would have filled, if not excellently, yet reasonably, well.

But indeed, if there is much in the difficulties with which these Epistles abound to repel and deter, there is much also in these same difficulties to allure and attract. And not in these only. The number of aspects in which they present themselves to us as full of interest is extraordinary.

For example, the points of peculiar attraction which they offer to the student of ecclesiastical history are many. Who are these Angels of the Churches? What do we learn from their evident preëminence in their several Churches, about the government and constitution of the Church in the later apostolic times? or is it lawful to draw any conclusions? Again, was there a body of heretics actually bearing the name of Nicolaitans in the times of St. John? And those that had the doctrine of Balaam, and the followers of the woman Jezebel, with what heretics mentioned elsewhere shall we identify these? Or, once more, what is the worth of that

historico-prophetical scheme of interpretation adopted by our own Joseph Mede and Henry More, and many others down even to the present day; who see in these seven Epistles the mystery of the whole evolution of the Church from the days of the Apostles to the close of the present dispensation? Was this so intended by the Spirit? or is it only a dream and fancy of men?

Nor less is there a strong attraction in these Epistles for those who occupy themselves with questions of pure exegesis, from the fact of so many unsolved, or imperfectly solved, problems of interpretation being found in them. It is seldom within so small a compass that so many questions to which no answer with perfect confidence can be given, occur. What, for instance, is the exact meaning, and what the etymology, of *χαλκολίβανος* (i. 15; ii. 18)? what the interpretation of the white stone with the new name written upon it (ii. 17)? why is Pergamum called 'Satan's seat' (ii. 13)? with many other questions of the same kind.

Nor can any one, I think, attentively studying, fail to be struck with what one might venture to call the entire originality of these seven Epistles, their entire unlikeness, in some points at least, to anything else in Scripture. Contemplate, for instance, the titles of Christ here, 'the Amen,' 'the Faithful and True Witness,' 'the Beginning of the Creation of God,' 'He that hath the seven Spirits of God,' and others which I might name. While the

analogy of faith is perfectly preserved, while there is no difficulty in harmonizing what is here taught of Christ's person and offices with that which is taught elsewhere, yet how wholly new a series of titles are these. It is the same with the promises; some, it is true, as 'the tree of life,' 'the crown of life,' 'the new name,' have been anticipated in other parts of Scripture, yet how many appear here for the first time; and set forth what Augustine so grandly calls, 'beatæ vitæ magna secreta,' under aspects as novel as they are animating and alluring; such are 'the hidden manna,' the 'white stone,' the 'white raiment,' the 'pillar in the temple of God,' and 'the morning star.' And very striking, as combined with this originality, with this free movement of the Spirit here, is the strict and rigid symmetrical arrangement of these Epistles, the way in which they are all laid out upon the same plan, distributed according to exactly the same ever-recurring laws. The surprise which we feel on tracing this for the first time, is similar to that which overtakes one who, attempting any thing like a critical study of the Psalms, discovers the rigorous laws to which, so far as concerns the form, they are for the most part submitted, or rather, which they have imposed on themselves, and to which they delight to conform.

Then, once more, the purely theological interest of these Epistles is great. I have already referred to the titles of Christ, the entirely novel aspects under which

the glory of the Son of God is here set forth. But they have another and profounder interest. Assuredly there is enough in these two chapters alone to render Arianism entirely untenable by any one who, admitting their authority, should consent to be bound in their interpretation by the ordinary rules of fairness and truth. On this matter I have several times dwelt in the course of my interpretation.

And, finally, the practical interest of these Epistles in their bearing on the whole pastoral and ministerial work is extreme. It is recorded of the admirable Bengel that it was his wont above all things to recommend the study of these Epistles to youthful ministers of Christ's Word and Sacraments. And indeed to them they are full of teaching, of the most solemn warning, of the strongest encouragement. We learn from these Epistles the extent to which the spiritual condition of a Church is dependent upon that of its pastors; the guilt, not merely of teaching, but of allowing, error; how there may be united much and real zeal for the form of sound words with a lamentable decay of the spirit of love; or, on the other hand, many works and active ministries of love, with only too languid a zeal for the truth once delivered; with innumerable lessons more. For one who has undertaken the awful ministry of souls, I know almost nothing in Scripture so searching, no threatenings so alarming, no promises so comfortable, as are some which these Epistles contain.

Surely, if all this be so, it is very much to be regretted that, while every chapter of every other book of the New Testament is set forth to be read in the Church, and, wherever there is daily service, is read in the Church, three times in the year, and some, or portions of some, are read oftener there, while even of the Apocalypse itself two chapters and portions of others have been admitted into the calendar, under no circumstances whatever can the second and third chapter ever be heard in the congregation. Any one who knows, or at all guesses, how small the amount of the private reading of the Scriptures among our people, and the extent, therefore, to which the stated public reading in the congregation is the source of whatever knowledge of it the great mass of our people possess, the means by which they are at all leavened by it, must deeply regret that chapters so rich in doctrine, in exhortation, in reproofs, in promises, should thus be withheld from them. Certainly, if at any time a reconsideration of the portions of Scripture appointed to be read in the Church should find place, the slight cast on these chapters, and in them on the Apocalypse itself, with the injury inflicted on the people by their total omission, ought not to be allowed to continue.¹

Whether the attempt here made to draw out some of

¹ It need hardly be observed, that what I complain of here has for several years ceased to be the fact.—*Note to the fourth edition, 1883.*

the riches contained in this portion of God's Word may have any interest for others, I know not: but for myself this volume must ever retain a very solemn interest. Besides the serious solemnity of giving any work that professes to be a work for God into the hands of men, I can never disconnect this book from two great sorrows which fell on me, while it was preparing for, and passing through, the press; sorrows which have left me far poorer than before; and yet, I would humbly hope, richer too, if better able to speak to others of truths whose price and value has been brought home with new power to myself; if theology has been thus more closely connected for me with life, and with life's toil and burden, from which it is ever in danger of being dissociated and divorced. It is my earnest hope that so it may prove; and in this hope I humbly commend my book, with all its shortcomings, to Him who can alone make it profitable to any.

DEANERY, WESTMINSTER :

July 31, 1861.

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COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA.

REVELATION II. III.

INTRODUCTION, REV. i. 4-20.

THE QUESTION, *Why* we enter the wondrous temple of this Book by the vestibule of these seven Epistles, what the exact relation in which they stand to the other parts of the Apocalypse, has not, within my knowledge, been ever very satisfactorily answered. So far from receiving an answer, to most interpreters the question is one which hardly seems to have so much as presented itself at all. And yet a thoughtful student of God's Word might here fitly pause, and reverently inquire *why* this Book should have this introduction. We are sure that Scripture, as it has every other perfection, so it must have the perfection of *form* and *proportion*; while yet it does not seem very easy to trace what is the relation here between these two:—the Book prophetic, the introduction for the most part historic; the Book universal in its character, including the whole Church in the range of its vision, the introductory Epistles having to do with separate and

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single Churches, and with the details of their inner spiritual condition. I will not affirm that Bengel's explanation exhausts the whole matter, but it appears to me the best which has been offered: 'Gravissima vii. harum Epistolarum causa est. Populus legem in Sinai suscepturus, prius sanctificabatur: idem operâ Johannis Baptistæ, cum immineret regnum Dei, per pœnitentiam præparabatur; nunc Ecclesia Christiana ad tantam Revelationem digne suscipiendam his instruitur epistolis. Id enim agitur ut malos, prius admonitos, et mala ex medio sui exterminans, ipsa cum suâ posteritate ad hoc pretiosissimum depositum, hanc tanti momenti revelationem recte amplectendam asservendamque, ad eventus maximos spectandos, et fructus uberrimos percipiendos, plagasque effugiendas præparetur, inspersis in ipsas epistolas revelationis reliquæ stricturis fulgidissimis, ad attentionem excitandam, et viam intelligentiæ muniendam aptissimis: ecclesiæque per pœnitentiam renovatio, ut par est, conspectui iridis præmittitur' (iv. 3).

Ver. 4. '*John to the seven Churches*¹ *in Asia.*'—So far as the Apocalypse is allowed to witness for its own authorship, we find in these words a strong internal evidence that we possess in it an authentic work of St. John. The writer avouches himself as '*John*;' but, though there may have been Johns many in the Church at this time, John the Presbyter and others, still it is well-nigh impossible to conceive any other but John *the Apostle* who would have named himself by this single name, with no further style or addition. We instinctively feel that for

¹ The words, '*which are,*' finding here a place in most modern editions of our Authorized Version, have no place in the exemplar edition of 1611.

any other there would have been here an affectation of humility, veiling a most real arrogance, in the very plainness of this title. Who else, without arrogance, could have taken for granted that the bare mention of his name was sufficient to ensure his recognition, or that he had a right to appropriate this name in so absolute a manner to himself? The unique position in the Church of St. John, the beloved Apostle, and now the sole surviving Apostle, the one remaining link between the faithful of that time and of the human lifetime of their Lord, abundantly justified in him what would have ill become any other; just as a king or queen, as representative persons in a nation, fitly sign by their Christian names only, but none beside them. Thus there are many at this day who bear the name of Victoria, but only one who signs herself by this and no other name. Despite of all which has been urged to avoid this conclusion, it is assuredly either John the Apostle and Evangelist who writes the Apocalypse; or one who, assuming his title and style, desires to pass himself off as John—in other words a *falsarius*. Are the opposers of St. John's authorship of this Book prepared for the alternative?

Of the seven Churches which St. John addresses here there will be better opportunity of speaking in particular when we reach the nominal enumeration of them (ver. 11); but as only here they are described as Churches '*in Asia*,' it may be well to say something of the '*Asia*' which is intended. We may trace two opposite movements going on in the names of countries, analogous to like movements which are continually finding place in other words. Sometimes they grow more and more inclusive, are applied in their later use to far wider tracts of the earth than they were in their earlier. It is thus with the name

‘Italy.’ Designating at one time only the extreme southern point of the central peninsula of Europe, the name crept on and up, till in the time of Augustus it obtained the meaning which it has ever since retained, including all within the Alps. So too ‘Germany’ was once no more than a little corner on the left bank of the lower Rhine (Grimm, *Gesch. der Deutschen Sprache*, p. 785). ‘France,’ ‘Burgundy,’ ‘Switzerland,’ ‘Holland’ are all later examples of the same gradual expansion of meaning which names of countries have undergone. Other names, on the contrary, once of the widest reach, gradually contract their meaning, till in the end they designate no more than a minute fraction of that which they designated at the beginning. ‘Asia’ furnishes a good example of this. In the New Testament, as generally in the language of men when the New Testament was written, ‘Asia’ meant not what it now means for us, and had once meant for the Greeks, one namely of the three great continents of the old world (*Æschylus, Prom. Vinc.* 412; *Pindar, Olymp.* vii. 18; *Herodotus*, iv. 38), nor yet even that region which geographers about the fourth century of our era began to call ‘Asia Minor;’ but a strip of the western sea-board containing hardly a third portion of this (cf. *1 Pet.* i. 1; *Acts* ii. 9; vi. 9). ‘Asia vestra,’ says Cicero (*Pro Flacc.* 27), addressing some Asiatics, ‘constat ex Phrygiâ, Mysiâ, Cariâ, Lydiâ;’ its limits being nearly identical with those of the kingdom which Attalus III. bequeathed (B.C. 133) to the Roman people (see Wieseler, *Chronol.* p. 31–35). Take ‘Asia’ in this sense, and there may be little or no exaggeration in the words of the Ephesian silversmith, that ‘almost throughout all Asia’ Paul had turned away much people from the service of idols (*Acts* xix. 26; cf. ver. 10); words which must seem to exceed even the limits of an angry hyperbole to

those not acquainted with this restricted use of the term. On the history of the word 'Asia' and what at different times it was taken to include or exclude, see an excellent note in Lee on Rev. i. 4, in the *Speaker's Commentary*.

'Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is and which was, and which is to come.'—This opening salutation may fitly remind us (for in reading the Apocalypse we are often in danger of forgetting it), that the Book is an Epistle, that, besides containing within its bosom those seven briefer Epistles addressed severally to the seven Churches in particular, it is itself an Epistle addressed to them as a whole, and as representing in their mystic unity all the Churches, or the Church (ii. 7, 11, 23, &c.). Of this larger Epistle, namely the Apocalypse itself, these seven Churches are the original receivers; not as having a nearer or greater interest in it than any other portion of the Universal Church; though as members of that Church they have an interest in it as near and great as can be conceived (i. 3; xxii. 18, 19); but on account of this their representative character, of which there will be occasion presently to speak. And being such an Epistle, it opens with the most frequently recurring apostolic salutation: 'Grace and peace.' This is the constant salutation of St. Paul (Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 3, &c.), with only the exception of his two Epistles to Timothy, where 'mercy' finds place between 'grace and peace' (cf. 2 John 3); the salutation also of St. Peter in both his Epistles; while St. James employs the less distinctively Christian 'greeting' (*χαίρειν*, i. 1; cf. Acts xxiii. 26).—On the departure from the ordinary rules of grammar, and apparent violation of them in the words, ἀπὸ ὁ ὄν, καὶ ὁ ἦν, καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, there will presently be something more to say. Doubtless the immutability of God, 'the same yesterday, and

to-day, and for ever' (Heb. xiii. 8), is intended to be expressed in this immutability of the name of God, in this absolute resistance to change or even modification which that name here presents. 'I am the Lord; I change not' (Mal. iii. 6), this is what is here declared; and there could be no stronger consolation for the faithful than thus to be reminded that He who is from everlasting to everlasting, 'with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (Jam. i. 17), was on their side; how then should they 'be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man which shall be made as grass' (Isai. li. 12, 13)?

And yet we must not understand the words, '*and which is to come,*' as though they declared the 'æternitas a parte post' in the same way as '*which was*' expresses the 'æternitas a parte ante.' It is difficult to understand how so many should assume without further question that *ὁ ἐρχόμενος* here is = *ὁ ἐσόμενος*, and that thus we have the eternity of God expressed here, so far as it can be expressed, in forms of time: 'He who was, and is, *and shall be.*' On the inadequacy and imperfection of all such language see Plato, *Timæus*, 38 A. But how *ὁ ἐρχόμενος* should ever have this significance it is hard to perceive. There is a certain ambiguity about our translation; it cannot be accused of incorrectness; yet, on the other hand, one does not feel sure that when our Translators rendered, '*which is to come,*' they did not mean '*which is to be.*' The Rheims, which is here kept right by the Vulgate ('*et qui venturus est*'), so renders the words as to exclude ambiguity, '*and which shall come.*' If any urge that '*which is, and which was,*' present and past, require to be completed with a future, '*and which shall be,*' to this it may be replied, that plainly they do not require to be so completed, seeing that at xi. 17, no such complement finds

place; for the words *καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος* have no right to a place there in the text; and in strong confirmation of the other interpretation, they are left out exactly because, according to it, they would now be inappropriate; for He is there contemplated as actually *having come* (*εἰληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου*). And then, on the other hand, there is every thing to recommend the grammatical interpretation. What is the key-note to this whole Book? Surely it is, 'Maranatha,' 'Our Lord cometh.' The world seems to have all things its own way, to kill my servants; but I come quickly.' With this announcement the Book begins, i. 7; with this it ends, xxii. 7, 12, 20; and this is a constantly recurring note through it all, ii. 5, 16; iii. 11; vi. 17; xi. 18; xiv. 7; xvi. 15; xviii. 20. It is Christ's word of comfort, or, where they need it, of warning, to his friends; of terror to his foes. We may say, indeed, that in some sort *ὁ ἐρχόμενος* is a proper name of our Lord (Matt. xi. 3; Luke vii. 19, 20; Heb. x. 37; John i. 15, 27; cf. Mal. iii. 1; Hab. ii. 3). Delitzsch: 'Es heisst *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, nicht *ἐλευσόμενος*, denn seit seiner Auffahrt ist Er und sein Tag fort und fort im Kommen begriffen, so dass immer von seiner Nähe die Rede seyn kann, und seine Erscheinung jederzeit zu erwarten ist.' Origen further notes the evidence which this language, rightly interpreted, yields for the equal divinity of the Son with the Father (*De Princ.* § 10): 'Ut autem unam et eandem omnipotentiam Patris ac Filii esse cognoscas, audi hoc modo Joannem in Apocalypsi dicentem, Hæc dicit Dominus Deus, qui est, et qui erat, et qui venturus est, Omnipotens. Qui enim venturus est, quis est alius nisi Christus?' Compare Hengstenberg, *Authentic des Pentateuches*, vol. i. pp. 236-250.—There should be no comma dividing 'which is' from the clause following, 'and which was.' These rather form one sen-

tence, which is to be balanced with the other, ‘*and which is to come.*’ How the Seer himself interprets the last clause of this description is clear from Rev. ii. 17, where they find no place in the text (they are omitted rightly in the R. V.); and why omitted? because they belong to a time when Christ had already come.

‘*And from the seven Spirits which are before his throne.*’—Compare iii. 1; iv. 5; v. 6. Some have understood by ‘*the seven Spirits,*’ the seven principal Angels, the heavenly realities of which ‘the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king’s face, and which sat the first in the kingdom’ (Esth. i. 14), the ‘seven counsellors’ (Ezra vii. 14), were a kind of earthly copy. Room for these seven Angels had been found in the later Jewish angelology (Tob. xii. 15), and the seal of allowance set on the number seven in this very Book (Rev. viii. 2). And these have not been merely Roman Catholic expositors, such as Bossuet and Ribera, tempted to this interpretation by their zeal to find any support for the worshipping of Angels; but others with no such temptations, as Beza, Hammond, Mede (in a sermon on Zech. iv. 10, *Works*, 1672, p. 40. cf. pp. 833, 908); and Ewald. They claim some of the Fathers for predecessors in the same line of interpretation; as Hilary, for example (*Tract. in Ps.* 118, *Lit.* 21, § 5). Clement of Alexandria is also claimed by Hammond; but neither in the passage cited, nor in the context (*Strom.* vi. 16), can I find that he affirms anything of the kind. But this interpretation, which after all is that of a small minority either of ancients or moderns, must be rejected without hesitation. Angels, often as they are mentioned in this Book, are never called ‘Spirits.’ So also, in testimony of their ministering condition, their creaturely state, they always *stand* (Rev. viii. 2; Luke i. 19;

I Kin. xxii. 19, 21), but the Spirits ‘*are*’ (ἔστίν) before the throne. Again, how it is possible to conceive the Apostle desiring ‘*grace and peace*’ to the Church from the Angels, let them be the chiefest Angels which are, or from any but from God alone, who is the God of *all* grace? Or how can we imagine Angels, created beings, interposed here between the Father and the Son, and thus set as upon an equal level with Them; the Holy Ghost meanwhile being passed by, as according to this interpretation He must be, in this solemn salutation of the Churches? Where, again, would be the singular glory claimed for Himself by the Son in those words, ‘*He that hath the seven Spirits of God*’ (iii. 1)? what transcendent prerogative in the fact that these Angels, with all other created things, were within his dominion?

There can then be no serious controversy on this point. By ‘*the seven Spirits*’ we must understand, not indeed the sevenfold operations of the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost sevenfold in his operations; ‘*that doth his sevenfold gifts impart.*’ Neither need there be any difficulty in reconciling this interpretation, as Mede urges, with the doctrine of his personality. It is only that He is regarded here not so much in his personal unity as in his manifold energies; just as light, being one, does yet in the prism separate itself into its seven colours; for ‘*there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*’ (I Cor. xii. 4). The matter could not be put better than by Richard of St. Victor: ‘*Et a septem Spiritibus, id est, a septiformi Spiritu, qui simplex quidem est per naturam, septiformis per gratiam;*’ and compare Delitzsch, *Bibl. Psychologie*, pp. 34, 147. The manifold gifts, operations, energies of the Holy Ghost are here represented under the number seven, being, as it is, the number of completeness in the Church. We

have anticipations of this in the Old Testament. When the prophet Isaiah would describe how the Spirit should be given not by measure to Him whose name is 'The Branch,' the enumeration of the gifts is sevenfold (xi. 2); and the seven eyes which rest upon the stone which the Lord has laid can mean nothing else but this (Zech. iii. 9. cf. iv. 10; Rev. v. 6). On the number 'seven,' and its significance in Scripture and elsewhere, above all in this Book, there will be something to be said presently.

Ver. 5. '*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness.*'—In the last of these seven Epistles He calls Himself 'the faithful and true Witness' (iii. 14); as, therefore, we shall meet these words again, and they will be there more conveniently dealt with, I shall content myself now with quoting Richard of St. Victor's noble comment upon them: 'Testis fidelis, quia de omnibus quæ per Eum testificanda erant in mundo testimonium fidele perhibuit. Testis fidelis, quia quæcunque audivit a Patre fideliter discipulis suis nota fecit. Testis fidelis, quia viam Dei in veritate docuit, nec Ei cura de aliquo fuit, nec personas hominum respexit. Testis fidelis, quia reprobis damnationem, et electis salvationem nunciavit. Testis fidelis, quia veritatem quam verbis docuit, miraculis confirmavit. Testis fidelis, quia testimonium Sibi a Patre nec in morte negavit. Testis fidelis, quia de operibus malorum et bonorum in die iudicii testimonium verum dabit.'—A reference to the original, where the nominative *ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός* is in apposition to the genitive *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, will show that we have here one of the many departures from the ordinary grammatical construction, with which this Book abounds. The officious emendations of transcribers have caused very many of these, though not this one, to disappear from our received text; but in any critical edition

of the Greek original the multitude of such is one of the most remarkable of the external features of the Book. To regard them, which some have done, as evidences of St. John's helplessness in the management of Greek, his 'unbeholfenheit' therein, as Ewald terms it, is to regard them altogether from a wrong point of view. Thus, to take the case immediately before us, it is not this which is to explain anything anomalous and unusual here, but rather that the doctrinal interest here overbears the grammatical. Düsterdieck very well: 'Das Gewicht der Vorstellungen selbst durchbricht die Schranken der regelrechten Form; die abrupte Redeweise hebt die gewaltige Selbstständigkeit aller drei Prädicate.' At all costs that all-important *ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός*, with the other two titles of the Lord which follow, shall be maintained in the dignity and emphasis of the *casus rectus*. Compare xiv. 12; and xx. 2, where *ὁ ὄφιν ὁ ἀρχαῖος* (changed in the received text into *τὸν ὄφιν τὸν ἀρχαῖον*), is in like manner in apposition to *τὸν δράκοντα*; but above all, and as making quite clear that St. John adopted these constructions with his eyes open, and for a distinct purpose, the remarkable *ἀπὸ ὃν κ. τ. λ.* of the verse preceding that now under consideration.¹

'*And the first begotten of the dead.*'—Cf. Col. i. 18, where very nearly the same language occurs, and the same title is given to the Lord: *ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν* here, *πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν* there. The phrases are not precisely identical in meaning; and even were they so, the suggestion of Hengstenberg, that St. John here builds upon St. Paul, setting his seal to the prior Apostle's word,

¹ There is a good discussion on these grammatical anomalies in the Apocalypse in Lücke's *Einleitung zur Offenb.* 2d edit. pp. 458-464. For an exactly parallel case in English, and from the same motives, see *Paradise Lost*, vi. 900.

seems to me highly unnatural. Glorious as this language is, who does not feel how easily two Apostles, quite independent of one another, might have arrived at it to express the same blessed truth? Christ is indeed '*the first begotten of the dead,*' notwithstanding that such raisings from the grave as that of the widow's son, and Jairus's daughter, and Lazarus, and his who revived at the touch of Elisha's bones (2 Kin. xiii. 21), went before. 'None of them could be truly said to be "begotten from the dead," but rather begotten to die again; for to be born and begotten from the dead includes an everlasting freedom from the power and approach of death' (Jackson). There was for them no repeal of the sentence of death, but a respite only; not to say that even during their period of respite they carried about with them a body of death. Christ first so rose from the dead, that He left death for ever behind Him; did not, and could not, die any more (Rom. vi. 9); in this respect was 'the first-fruits of them that slept' (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23), 'the Prince of life' (Acts iii. 15). Alcuin: 'Primogenitus ideo dicitur quia nullus ante Ipsum non moriturus surrexit.' In this '*first begotten of the dead*' (or '*first born from the dead,*' as it is at Col. i. 18), I do not see the image of the grave as the womb that bare Him (*λύσας τὰς ὀδίνους τοῦ θανάτου*, Acts ii. 24); but, remembering how often *τίκτειν* = *γεννᾶν*, I should rather put this passage in connexion with Ps. ii. 7, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee.' It will doubtless be remembered that St. Paul (Acts xiii. 33; cf. Heb. i. 5) claims the fulfilment of these words not in the eternal generation before all time of the Son; still less in his human conception in the Blessed Virgin's womb; but rather in his resurrection from the dead; 'declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from

the dead' (Rom. i. 4). On that verse in Ps. ii., and with reference to Acts xiii. 32, Hilary (the depth and theological value of whose commentaries on Scripture seem to me at this day very imperfectly recognized), has these words: 'Filius meus es Tu, Ego hodie genui Te; non ad Virginis partum, neque ad eam quæ ante tempora est generationem, sed ad primogenitum ex mortuis pertinere apostolica auctoritas est.' To Him first, to Him above all others, God said on that day when He raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee.'

'*And the Prince of the kings of the earth.*'—A manifest reference to Ps. ii. 2, where the 'kings of the earth' (cf. Rev. vi. 15, for the same phrase used in the same sense) appear in open rebellion against the Christ of God; cf. Acts iv. 26; Ps. cx. 5; lxxxix. 27; Isai. lii. 15; Matt. xxviii. 18. Such a '*Prince of the kings of the earth*' He becomes in the exaltation which follows on his humiliation, and which is directly connected with it (Phil. ii. 9; Ps. lxxxix. 27); and shows Himself such at his glorious coming, as set forth in the later parts of this Book, 'Lord of lords, and King of kings' (xvii. 14; xix. 16); breaking in pieces all of those '*kings of the earth*' who set themselves in battle array against Him, receiving the homage of all who are wise in time (Ps. ii. 10-12), and bring their glory and honour to lay them at his feet, and to receive them back at his hands (Rev. xxi. 24).

'*Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*'—The words are richer still in comfort, when we read, as we ought, ἀγαπῶντι and not ἀγαπήσαντι: '*Unto Him that loveth us,*' whose love rests evermore on his redeemed. There is in the theology of the Greek Church an old and often-recurring play on the

words *λύτρον* and *λουτρόν*, words so nearly allied in sound, and both expressing so well, though under images entirely diverse, the central benefits which redound to us through the sacrifice of the death of Christ. It is indeed older than this, and is implicitly involved in the etymology of Apollo, which Plato, in jest or in earnest, puts into the mouth of Socrates (*Cratylus*, 405 B): *ὁ ἀπολούων τε καὶ ἀπολύων τῶν κακῶν*, these *κακά* being impurities of the body and of the soul. This near resemblance between *λύειν* and *λούειν* has given rise to a very interesting variety of readings here. Whichever reading we adopt, *λύσαντι* or *λούσαντι*, 'who hath released us,' or 'who hath washed us,' the words yield a beautiful meaning, as in either case they link themselves on to a whole circle of imagery already hallowed and consecrated by Scripture use. If we adopt *λύσαντι*, as does the R. V., the passage connects itself then with all those which speak of Christ having given Himself as a *λύτρον* (Matt. xx. 28), as an *ἀντίλυτρον* for us (1 Tim. ii. 6. cf. 1 Pet. i. 18; Heb. ix. 12); as redeeming or purchasing us (Gal. iii. 13; iv. 5; Rev. v. 9; xiv. 3, 4); and somewhat more remotely with as many as describe the condition of sin as a condition of bondage, sinners as servants of sin (John vi. 17, 20; viii. 34; 2 Pet. ii. 19), and Christ as having obtained freedom for us (John viii. 33, 36; Rom. viii. 21; Gal. v. 1). If on the other hand we read *λούσαντι*, then the passage connects itself with such other as Ps. li. 4; Isai. i. 16, 18; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Rev. vii. 14; as Acts xxii. 16; Ephes. v. 26; Tit. iii. 5; so, too, with all those which describe the *καθαρίζειν* as the object (Eph. v. 26; Tit. ii. 14; Heb. ix. 14), the *καθαρισμός* as the fruit, of Christ's death (Heb. i. 3; 2 Pet. i. 9); and somewhat more remotely with as many as under types of the Levitical law set

forth the benefits of this heavenly washing (Num. xix. 17-21). The weight of *external* evidence is so nearly balanced that it is very difficult to say on which side it predominates. The equilibrium of the scale is clearly marked by the way in which the critical editions are divided here. The R. V. which, as we have seen, has adopted *λύσαντι*, has yet thought it right to append these words, ‘Many authorities, some ancient, read *λούσαντι*.’ Keeping in view the poetic character of this Book, *λούσαντι* certainly seems preferable to the comparatively prosaic *λύσαντι*. Then, too, while it is quite true that redemption may be contemplated as a *λύειν ἐν τῷ αἵματι*, by better right, and with imagery livelier still, it may be set forth as a *λούειν ἐν τῷ αἵματι*. Nor can it be denied, if we interpret this Book, as clearly we ought, from itself rather than from any other part even of Scripture itself, that Rev. vii. 14 points strongly this way.

Ver. 6. ‘*And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.*’—Or rather, and according to the reading which must be preferred, ‘*And hath made us a kingdom [ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν], priests unto God and his Father*’ (‘*Et fecit nos regnum, [et] sacerdotes Deo,*’ Vulgate). There is a certain apparent inconcinnity in the abstract *βασιλείαν* joined with the concrete *ἱερεῖς*, but there can be no question about the reading, and the meaning remains exactly the same; except, indeed, that instead of the emphasis being equally distributed between the two words, the larger portion of it now falls on the first; and this agrees with the prominence given to the *reigning* of the saints in this Book (v. 10; xx. 4, 6; xxii. 5. cf. Dan. vii. 18, 22).—The royal priesthood of the redeemed (see Exod. xix. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 9) flows out of the royal priesthood of the Redeemer, a Priest for ever after

the order of Melchizedek (Ps. cx. 4; Zech. vi. 13; Heb. v. 10; vii. 17). That the whole number of the redeemed shall in the world of glory have been made '*priests unto God*' is the analogue as regards persons to the new Jerusalem being without temple, or, in other words, being all temple, which is declared further on (xxi. 22; cf. Isai. iv. 5, 6). It is the abolition of every distinction between holy and profane (Zech. xiv. 20, 21), nearer and more remote from God, not through all being henceforward profane, which will be Antichrist's reconciliation of the contradictions between the flesh and the spirit, but through all being henceforth holy, all being brought the nearest whereof it is capable, to God.

'*To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*'—A few words on the doxologies, or ascriptions of glory to God, which are found in the New Testament, and in which the Book of Revelation is pre-eminently rich, may here fitly find place. Great variety reigns in these. Some are much fuller than others; nor is this the only way in which they assert their liberty, and make plain that they are not restricted to any fixed words or order of words. Not seldom the doxology is single; thus at Rom. xi. 36; xvi. 27; at both which places *δόξα* by itself comprehends all of glorious which is ascribed to God; while at Rev. vii. 10, *σωτηρία* stands single in the same way. Sometimes it is twofold: thus, at 1 Tim. i. 17, *τιμή* and *δόξα*; at 1 Pet. iv. 11, *δόξα* and *κράτος*; at v. 11 and at Rev. v. 13, the same; at 1 Tim. vi. 16, *τιμή* and *κράτος*. We have next the threefold ascription. Of this we have an example at Rev. xix. 1, *σωτηρία*, *δόξα* and *δύναμις*, and another at Rev. iv. 11. Sometimes the doxology is fourfold: thus, at Rev. v. 13, *εὐλογία*, *τιμή*, *δόξα*, *κράτος*; and again at Jude 25, *δόξα*, *μεγαλωσίνη*, *κράτος*, *ἐξουσία*. Sometimes

the ascription is sevenfold. It is so at Rev. v. 12 : *δύναμις, πλοῦτος, σοφία, εὐχαριστία, τιμή, δόξα, εὐλογία* ; and again at vii. 12 ; with a noticeable change in the succession of the words, as well as the introduction of a new word in each : *εὐλογία, δόξα, σοφία, εὐχαριστία, τιμή, δύναμις, ἰσχύς*. When we count up these, and the frequency of their several recurrence, *δόξα*, which St. Basil does but poorly define as *ὁ ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἔπαινος*, appears, as might be expected, the oftenest—no less than ten times ; *τιμή*, six times ; *κράτος*, as many ; *δύναμις*, three times ; *εὐλογία*, as often ; *σοφία*, twice ; *εὐχαριστία*, as often ; *σωτηρία, μεγαλωσύνη, ἐξουσία, πλοῦτος, ἰσχύς*, each of these but once.¹ A study of doxological words, or of words doxologically used, with an accurate comparison of them one with the other, would very amply repay the pains bestowed upon it ; above all as it served to remind us of the prominence which the doxological element assumes in the highest worship of the Church, the very subordinate place which it oftentimes takes in ours. We can perhaps make our requests known unto God ; and this is well, for it is prayer ; but to give glory to God, quite apart from anything to be directly gotten by ourselves in return, to give thanks to Him for his great glory, this is better, for it is adoration ; but if better, it is rarer too.

Ver. 7. ‘*Behold, He cometh with clouds,*’ or ‘*with the clouds.*’—The constant recurrence of this language in all descriptions of our Lord’s second advent is very remarkable (Dan. vii. 13 ; Matt. xxiv. 30 ; xxvi. 64 ; Mark xiv. 62), and all the meaning of the announcement will scarcely be attained till that great day of the Lord shall have

¹ In the doxology at 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12, the only one which I know of with a fivefold ascription, three terms, *καύχημα, νίκη, δυναστεία*, not found in any of those of the New Testament, occur.

itself arrived. This much seems certain, namely, that this *accompaniment of clouds* (it is *μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν*) belongs not to the glory and gladness, but to the terror and anguish, of that day; as indeed the context of the present passage would indicate. These clouds have nothing in common with the light-cloud, the *νεφέλη φωτεινή* (Matt. xvii. 5), 'the glorious privacy of light' into which the Lord was withdrawn for a while from the eyes of his disciples at the Transfiguration, but are rather the symbols of wrath, fit accompaniments of judgment: 'Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne' (Ps. xcvii. 2; cf. xviii. 11; Nah. i. 3; Isai. xix. 1; cf. Rev. xi. 12).

'*And every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.*' The R. V. has here for '*kindreds*' '*tribes,*' and for '*wail*' '*mourn.*'—It will sometimes happen that a prophecy, severe in the Old Testament, by some gracious turn will be transformed from a threat to a promise in the New; thus, the 'day of visitation' of the Apostle (1 Pet. ii. 12), and of his Lord (Luke xix. 44), is another from the 'day of visitation' of the prophets (Isai. x. 3; Jer. viii. 12; Hos. ix. 7),—the one a day to be hoped for, the other to be feared. But it is not so here. There is indeed a turn, yet not from the severe to the gracious, but the contrary. The words of the prophet Zechariah (xii. 10), on which this passage and John xix. 37 in common rest, are words of grace: 'They shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.' They express the profound repentance of the Jews, when the veil shall be at length taken from their hearts, and they shall behold in Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified, the Son of God, the King of

Israel. But it cannot be denied that in their adaptation here they speak quite another language. They set forth the despair of the sinful world, of 'all the tribes of the earth' (cf. Matt. xxiv. 30), when Christ the Judge shall come to execute judgment on all that obeyed not his gospel, who pierced Him with their sins; they describe their remorse and despair; but give no hint of their repentance. The closing words, '*Even so, Amen,*' are not to be taken as the prophet's devout acquiescence in the terribleness of that judgment-day,—a comparison with xxii. 20 might easily lead an English reader into this misunderstanding of them,—but as God's own seal and ratification of his own word.

Ver. 8. '*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord.*'—Cf. xxi. 6, where the words '*the beginning and the ending*' have a right to a place in the text; but not here; having been transferred from thence, without any authority at all. He who is '*Alpha and Omega*' (or better, '*Alpha and Ω*'), and thus indeed '*the beginning and the ending,*' and '*the first and the last*' (i. 17; ii. 8), leaves no room for any other; is indeed the only I AM; and beside Him there is no God (Isai. xli. 4; xliii. 10; xlv. 6; xlvi. 12). Thus Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* iv. 25): *κύκλος γὰρ ὁ Υἱὸς πασῶν τῶν δυνάμεων εἰς ἐν εἰλουμένων καὶ ἐνουμένων διὰ τοῦτο Ἄλφα καὶ Ω εἴρηται*: and Tertullian, bringing out the unity of the Old and New Testaments, and the manner in which the glorious consummations of the latter attach themselves to the glorious commencements of the former (*De Monog.* 5): '*Sic et duas Græciæ litteras summam et ultimam sibi induit Dominus, initii et finis concurrentium in se figuras; uti quemadmodum α ad ω usque volvitur, et rursus ω ad α explicatur, ita ostenderet in se esse et initii decursum*

ad finem, et finis recursum ad initium ; ut omnis dispositio in Eum desinens, per quem cœpta est, per Sermonem scilicet Dei qui caro factus est, proinde desit quemadmodum et cœpit.'

'Which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.'—Cf. ver. 4. Παντοκράτωρ occurs several times in this Book (as at iv. 8 ; xi. 17 ; xxi. 22) ; elsewhere only once in the New Testament, and then as a quotation from the Old (2 Cor. vi. 18). We have always translated it 'Almighty,' except at Rev. xix. 6, where with a very sublime effect our Saxon 'Almighty' is exchanged for the Latin 'Omnipotent.' In the Septuagint παντοκράτωρ does duty for two Hebrew words. In the Book of Job, but in that exclusively (v. 17 ; xv. 25 ; xxvii. 2, and often), it stands for יְשׁוּבָה, in which word is expressed the strength, force, or power by which God is able to do all things. Elsewhere it is used by the Septuagint Translators as one, the most frequent, but by no means the only, rendering of יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (as at Jer. iii. 19 ; Amos iii. 13 ; Hab. ii. 13), which at other times they have rendered by κύριος δυνάμεων, or στρατιῶν, or σαβαώθ, this last preferred by St. Paul (Rom. ix. 29) and St. James (v. 4), a title expressing the rule and dominion which God has over all. If it be asked, which of these divine titles Christ is claiming here, which of these attributes He is here challenging for his own, omnipotence, or universal dominion,—of course they run into one another, but still are capable of being distinguished—a comparison of Rev. iv. 8 with Isai. vi. 3 leaves no doubt that it is the last ; 'dominion over all, and the rule and government of all' (see Pearson, *On the Creed*, Art. 1 ; Suicer, *Thes.* s. v.). In the Arian controversy the word was frequently appealed to and urged by the Catholics in proof of the equal divinity of the Son,

who did not count it robbery to claim it for his own ; thus see Gregory of Nyssa, *Con. Eunom.* i. 2.

Ver. 9. ‘ *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*’—Daniel alone among the Prophets of the Old Testament uses this style—‘ I Daniel ’ (vii. 28 ; ix. 2 ; x. 2) ; it is one of the many points of resemblance, small and great, between this Book and that of Daniel. The *καί*, represented by ‘ *who also am* ’ in our Version, and modifying this whole clause, should have no place in the text. It may have been suggested by 1 Pet. v. 1 ; and was probably inserted by some who esteemed *ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν* too humble a title for one of the chief ‘ pillars ’ of the Church ; and by that *καί* would make him to say, ‘ who, being an Apostle, am *also* a brother.’—It has been sometimes asked, *When* was that prophecy and promise fulfilled concerning John, that he should drink of his Lord’s cup, and be baptized with his Lord’s baptism (Matt. xx. 22) ? The fulfilment, so far as his brother James was concerned, is plain ; when the sword of Herod was dyed with his blood (Acts xii. 2). But for John it may not be so plain. Origen, however, no doubt gave the right answer long ago (*in Matt.* tom. xvi. § 6, *in fine*): that threat or that promise, for we may call it either, found its fulfilment in this his banishment to Patmos ; not thereby denying that there must have been a life-long *θλίψις* for such an one as the Apostle John, but only affirming that the words obtained their most emphatic and crowning fulfilment now. Let us not fail to observe the connexion and the sequence—‘ *tribulation* ’ first, and ‘ *the kingdom* ’ afterwards ; on which Richard of St. Victor well : ‘ *Recte præmisit, in tribu-*

lacione, et post addit, *in regno*, quia si compatimur, et corregnabimus' (2 Tim. ii. 12. cf. Rom. viii. 17; 1 Pet. iv. 13). As yet, however, while the tribulation is present, the kingdom is only in hope; therefore he adds to these, as that which is the link between them, '*and patience of Jesus Christ*;' compare Acts xiv. 22, where exactly these same three, the '*tribulation*,' the '*patience*,' and the '*kingdom*' occur. Ἐπομονή, which we have rendered '*patience*,' being exactly opposed to ὑποστολή (Heb. x. 36, 39), is not so much the '*patientia*' as the '*perseverantia*' of the Latin; which last word Cicero (*De Invent.* ii. 54) thus defines: '*In ratione bene consideratâ stabilis et perpetua mansio*;' and Augustine (*Quæst.* lxxxiii. qu. 31): '*Honestatis aut utilitatis causâ rerum arduarum ac difficilium voluntaria ac diuturna perpessio*.' It is indeed a beautiful word, expressing the brave and persistent endurance of the Christian—*βασιλις τῶν ἀρετῶν*, Chrysostom does not fear to call it (see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 53).—Patmos, now Patmo or Palmosa, one of the Sporades, a rocky island in the Icarian Sea, S.-W. of Ephesus, might have remained through all the ages with faintest notice or with none, if its mention here had not drawn it from its insignificance and given to it a name and a fame in the Church for ever. This its entire previous insignificance is slightly, yet unmistakably, indicated in the words '*that is called Patmos*.' St. John does not assume his readers to be familiar with it, any more than St. Mark, writing for those living at a distance from Palestine, with the Jordan (cf. Mark i. 5 with Matt. iii. 5). It is otherwise that a well-known island, Crete or Cyprus, is introduced (Acts xiii. 4). The deportation of criminals, or those accounted as such, to rocky and remote islands was, as is well known, a common punishment among the

Romans. Titus, according to Suetonius, banished some delators 'in asperrimas insularum' (*Tit.* 8; cf. Juvenal, i. 73; Philo, *in Flacc.* § 18, 19). There is a description of this island written up to the present date, and not without a certain idyllic grace of its own, in Renan's *L'Antechrist*, pp. 372-379. At the same time very characteristic of the man are his regrets that some 'delicious romance,' such as Longus might have written, had not here been composed, so far preferable as this would have been to the work of the gloomy enthusiast ('*visionnaire ténébreux*'), which we actually possess.

The unprejudiced reader will hardly be persuaded that St. John sets himself forth here as any other than one of those *constrained* dwellers in Patmos, one dwelling there not by his own choice, but who had been *banished* thither 'for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ;' thus compare vi. 9; xx. 4; and a possible reference to what he himself was undergoing, at xiii. 10. Some modern interpreters find in these words no reference to any such suffering for the truth's sake, but only a statement on the writer's part that he was in the isle of Patmos for the sake of preaching the Word of God, or, as others, for the sake of receiving a communication of the Word of God, that is, of the Book of this prophecy; so Bleek, Lücke (*Offenbarung d. Johannes*, pp. 510-514), and others; but these refuse the obvious meaning, which moreover a comparison with vi. 9; xx. 4, seems to render imperative, in favour of one which, if it also may possibly lie in them, has nothing but this bare possibility to plead. These expositors, it is difficult not to think, have been unconsciously influenced by a desire to get rid of the strong testimony to St. John's authorship of the Book which lies in the consent of this declaration

with that which early ecclesiastical history tells us about him, namely, that for his steadfastness in the faith of Christ he was by Domitian banished to Patmos, and only allowed to return to his beloved flock at Ephesus on the accession of Nerva (Tertullian, *De Præsc. Hæret.* 36; Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Div. Salv.* 42; Eusebius, *H. E.* iii. 23; Jerome, *De Vir. Illus.*). The Apocalypse, it is worth observing by the way, has all internal evidence of having been thus written in time of persecution and by a confessor of the truth. It breathes throughout the very air of martyrdom. Oftentimes slighted by the Church in times of prosperity, it is made much of, and its preciousness, as it were, instinctively discovered, in times of adversity and fiery trial. This Bengel has noted well: ‘In tribulatione fidelibus maxime hic liber sapit. Asiatica Ecclesia, præsertim a floridissimo Constantini tempore, minus magni æstimavit hunc librum. Africana Ecclesia, cruci magis obnoxia, semper hunc librum plurimi fecit.’ Tertullian may be quoted in proof of this assertion. How often does he seek, now to strengthen the faithful with the promises, and now to terrify the fearful, the *δειλοί* of Rev. xxi. 8, those who out of fear of man go back from Christ, with the threatenings, of this Book (*Scorp.* 12; *De Cor.* 15; cf. Cyprian, *De Exhort. Mart.* passim).

Ver. 10. ‘*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.*’—In one sense the faithful are always ‘*in the Spirit*’; they are ‘spiritual’ (1 Cor. iii. 1, 15); are ‘led by the Spirit’ (Rom. viii. 14); ‘walk in the Spirit’ (Gal. v. 16, 25). But here, and at iv. 2; xxi. 10 (cf. Ezek. xl. 2, ‘in the visions of God’), the words are used in an eminent and peculiar sense; they describe not the habitual condition of faithful men, but an exceptional state, differing from the other not in degree only, but in kind; a condition in

which there is a suspension of all the motions and faculties of the natural life; that a higher life may be called, during and through this suspension, into a preternatural activity. It is the state of trance or ecstasy, that is, of standing out of oneself, *θεία ἐξαλλαγή τῶν εἰωθότων νομίμων* Plato (*Phædrus*, 265 A) calls it, and on its positive side, *ἐνθουσιάζειν* (*Απολ.* 22 C), the man being *ἔκφρων* that he may be *ἐνθεος* (*Ion*, 533 E); constantly described in Scripture as the condition of those to whom God would speak more directly (*Acts* x. 10; cf. xi. 5; xxii. 17); the antithesis to it, or the return out of it, being a *γενόμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ* (*Acts* xii. 11), or *ἐν τῷ νοῦ* (*I Cor.* xiv. 15).¹ St. Paul exactly describes the experience of one who has passed through this state, *2 Cor.* xii. 2-4. That world of spiritual realities is one from which man is comparatively estranged so long as he dwells in this house of clay; he has need to be transported out of himself, before he can find himself in the midst of it, and come into direct contact with it. Here we have the explanation of the fact that the Lord never was 'in the Spirit,' namely, because He was *always* 'in the Spirit,' because He always moved in that region as his proper haunt and home.

Separated in body from the fellowship of the faithful, the beloved Apostle was yet keeping with them the weekly feast of the Resurrection on the day which the Lord,

¹ Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. ciii.* 11): 'Illo orante [*Acts* x. 10] facta est illi mentis alienatio, quam Græci ecstasim dicunt; id est, aversa est mens ejus a consuetudine corporali ad visum quendam contemplandum, alienata a præsentiis;' cf. *in Ps. lxxvii.* 28; *Quæst. in Gen.* l. 1, qu. 80; and *De Div. Quæst.* l. 2, qu. 1: 'Mentis alienatio a sensibus corporis, ut spiritus hominis divino Spiritu assumptus capiendis atque intuentis imaginibus vacet.' Cf. Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* 2^a 2^m, qu. 175.

giving to it his own name, had made peculiarly his own. It was, as St. John is careful to declare to us, ‘*on the Lord’s Day*,’ which occupied for the Church the place occupied by the Sabbath for the Jews, that he thus passed out of himself, and was brought within the veil, and heard unspeakable words, and beheld things which, unless shown by God, must have remained for ever hidden from mortal gaze. Some have assumed from this passage that *ἡμέρα κυριακή* was a designation of Sunday already familiar among Christians. This, however, seems a mistake. The name had probably its origin here. See generally on the subject the article ‘*Lord’s Day*’ in Smith’s *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*. A little later we find *κυριακή* employed by Ignatius to designate Sunday (*ad Magnes.* § 9), and by Melito of Sardis (Routh, *Reliq. Sac.* vol. i. pp. 114, 129), as ‘*Dominica solemnia*’ (*De Animâ*, c. 9), ‘*dies Dominicus*’ (*De Idol.* 14) by Tertullian; cf. Dionysius of Corinth, quoted by Eusebius, *H. E.* iv. 23, 8; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vii. 12; Origen, *Con. Cels.* viii. 22. But though the name, ‘*the Lord’s Day*,’ will very probably have had here its rise (the actual form of the phrase may have been suggested by *κυριακὸν δεῖπνον*, 1 Cor. xi. 20),—the thing, the celebration of the first day of the week as that on which the Lord brake the bands of death, and became the head of a new creation, called therefore sometimes *ἀναστάσιμος ἡμέρα*, this was as old as Christianity itself (John xx. 24–29; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Acts xx. 7; *Ep. of Barnabas*, c. 15: *ἄγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ὀγδόην εἰς εὐφροσύνην*; cf. Suicer, *Thes.* s. v. *κυριακή*). The strange fancy of some that *ἡμέρα κυριακή* means here ‘*the day of the Lord*,’ in the sense of ‘*the day of judgment*’ (as at Joel i. 15; iii. 14), intended as it is to subserve a scheme of Apocalyptic interpretation which

certainly needs all support which it can anywhere find, has been abundantly refuted by Alford.

‘*And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.*’—The wondrous vision which the Seer shall behold does not break upon him all at once; he first hears behind him (cf. Ezek. i. 12) ‘*a voice, great as of a trumpet,*’ summoning his attention, and preparing him for the still greater sight which he shall see. It is a ‘*great voice,*’ as the voice of the Lord must ever be (Ps. xxix. 3-9; lxviii. 33; Dan. x. 6; Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Thess. iv. 16): a voice penetrating and clear, ‘*as of a trumpet;*’ cf. Sophocles, *Ajax*, 17, where Ulysses compares in like manner the voice of Athêne to the sound of a trumpet. In the comparison there *may be* allusion, as Hengstenberg is sure there is, to the divinely-instituted rule of calling together by a trumpet the congregation of the Lord, when He had any thing to impart to them (Num. x. 2; Exod. xix. 16, 19; Joel ii. 1, 15; Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Thess. iv. 16); although this to me does not seem very probable.

Ver. 11. ‘*Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven Churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*’—Omit ‘*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,*’ which has no right whatever to stand in the text. Over-busy transcribers have transferred the first of these clauses from ver. 8, the second from ver. 17. Omit also ‘*which are in Asia,*’ as the R. V. has done. Of the several cities I will say something when we come to treat of them one by one. It is disputed whether the ‘*book*’ which St. John is to write, and having written, to send to the seven Churches, is this whole Book of the

Apocalypse, or only the seven shorter Epistles contained in chapters ii. and iii. Hengstenberg affirms the last; but I am persuaded wrongly, and he has against him the great body of interpreters. '*What thou seest*' must in that case be restrained to ver. 12-16 of this present chapter. All the rest, to the end of chapter iii., he will have *heard*; but will have seen nothing; and moreover ver. 19 is decisive that what he is to write of is more than that which he has then seen: '*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*'

Doubtless it is not for nothing that *seven* Churches, neither more nor fewer, are here named. The reason of this lies deeper than some suggest, who will have these seven to include and exhaust all the principal Churches of Asia; whatever other Churches there were being merely annexed and subordinate to these. But taking into account the rapid spread of the Gospel in the regions of Asia Minor, as recorded in Scripture (Acts xix. 9; 1 Cor. xvi. 9), and in other historical documents of a date very little later, we cannot doubt that towards the end of the life of St. John there were flourishing and important Churches in many other cities of that region besides these seven; that if the first purpose of the great ascended Bishop of the Church had been to bring under spiritual review the whole Church of Asia, in this case Colosse, to which St. Paul addressed an Epistle, and Hierapolis, where was already the nucleus of a Church in the same Apostle's time (Col. iv. 13), and where a little later Papias was bishop, and Miletus, the scene of apostolic labours (Acts xx. 17), and Tralles, called by Cicero '*gravis, ornata et locuples civitas,*' to the Church in which city Ignatius wrote an epistle some twenty years later, as he

did to that in Magnesia as well, these with others would scarcely have been passed by.¹ But what we may call the mystical or symbolic interest overbears and predominates over the actual. No doubt this actual was sufficiently provided for in another way, and these seven words of warning and encouragement so penetrated to the heart of things that, meeting the needs of these seven Churches, they also met the needs of all others subsisting in similar, or nearly similar conditions. Typical and representative Churches, these embodied, one or another of them, I will not say *all* the great leading aspects of the Church in her faithfulness or her unfaithfulness; but they embodied a great many, the broadest and the oftenest recurring. Grotius: ‘Sub earum nomine tacite comprehendit et alias Ecclesias, quia earum status et qualitates ad septem quasi genera possunt revocari, quorum exemplum præbent illæ Asiaticæ.’ The seven must in this point of view be regarded as constituting a complex whole, as possessing an ideal completeness. Christ, we feel sure, could not have placed Himself in the relation which He does to them, as holding in his hand the seven stars, walking among the seven golden candle-

¹ An instructive chapter in Tacitus (*Annal.* iv. 55), throws much light on the relative dignity and position, at a period a little earlier than this, of the chief cities in proconsular Asia. He is describing a contention which found place among eleven of them, which should have the honour of erecting a statue and temple to Tiberius. Among the eleven contending for this glorious privilege, which involved as well the maintaining as the founding of this cult, five out of our seven appear. Two, namely Philadelphia and Thyatira, do not enter the lists. Laodicea, with others not included in our seven, is set aside, as unequal in wealth and dignity to the task; Pergamum as having already a temple to Augustus, Ephesus as devoted to Diana, and other cities for various causes; till at length Smyrna and Sardis are the only competitors which remain. Of these Smyrna is preferred, mainly on account of its greater devotedness to the interests of Rome in times when as yet the fortunes of the Imperial City were not so completely in the ascendant as now they were.

sticks, these stars being the Angels of the Churches, and the candlesticks the Churches themselves, unless they ideally represented and set forth, in some way or other, the universal Church, militant here upon earth.

But this, which I have here rather assumed than proved, together with another question, namely, whether besides possessing this typical and representative character, these seven Epistles are not also historico-prophetical, do not unfold the future of the Church's fortunes to the end of time, seven *successive* stages and periods of its growth and history, has been so eagerly discussed, has, strangely enough, roused so much theological passion, that I am unwilling to treat the subject with the brevity which a place in this *Exposition* would require. I must therefore refer the reader to an Excursus at the end of the volume, in which I have traced, rapidly indeed, but with some attempt at completeness, a sketch of the controversy, and have stated, and sought to justify, the conclusions on the points in debate at which I have myself arrived.

Ver. 12. ‘*And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.*’ — *Λυχία* is a word condemned by the Greek purists, who prefer *λύχνιον* (Lobeck, *Phrynichus*, p. 313). The ‘*seven candlesticks*’—the rendering is not a very happy one, though it is not easy, perhaps impossible, to better it—send us back, and are intended to send us back, to the seven-branched candlestick, or candelabrum, which bears ever the same name of *λυχία* in the Septuagint (Exod. xxv. 31; cf. Heb. ix. 2; Philo, *Quis Rer. Div. Hær.* 44; Josephus, *B. J.* v. 5. 5); or *λυχία τοῦ φωτός* (1 Macc. i. 21); the six arms of which with the central shaft (*καλαμίσκοι*, Exod. xxv. 31; *κλάδοι*, Philo, *Vit. Mos.* iii. 9) made up the mystical seven, each with its several lamp

(*λύχνος*, Zech. iv. 2). Nor is this the first occasion when that portion of the furniture of the tabernacle has had a higher mystical meaning ascribed to it. Already in the candlestick all of gold, which Zechariah saw (iv. 2), there was an anticipation of this image; being one of the many remarkable points of contact between his prophecies and the Apocalypse. Here, however, it is not one candlestick with seven branches which St. John beholds: but rather seven separate candlesticks. Nor is it without a meaning that the seven thus take the place of the one. The Jewish Church was one; for it was the Church of a single people; the Christian Church, that too is one, but it is also many; at once the 'Church' and the 'Churches.' These may be quite independent of one another, the only bond of union with one another which they absolutely require being that of common dependence on the same Head, and derivation of life from the same Spirit; and are fitly represented by seven, the number of mystical completeness.

In the image itself by which the Churches are symbolised there is an eminent fitness. The candlestick, or lamp-stand, as we must rather conceive it here, is not light, but it is the bearer of light, that which diffuses it, that which holds it forth and causes it to shine throughout the house; being the appointed instrument for this. It is thus with the Church. God's word, God's truth, including in this all which He has declared of Himself in revealed religion, is its light (Ps. cxix. 105; Prov. vi. 23); the Church is the light-bearer, light in the Lord (Ephes. v. 8), not having light of its own, but diffusing that which it receives of Him. Each too of the faithful in particular, after he has been illuminated (Heb. vi. 4), is a bearer of the light; 'ye are the light of the world' (Matt. v. 14-16); 'lights in the world, holding forth the word of life'

(Phil. ii. 15). In agreement with this aspect of the matter, in the Levitical tabernacle the seven-branched candlestick stood in the Holy Place (Exod. xxvi. 35; xl. 4), which was the pattern of the Church upon earth, as the Holy of Holies was the pattern of the Church in heaven; and the only light which the Holy Place received was derived from the candlestick; the light of common day being quite excluded from it, in sign that the Lord God was the light thereof, that the light of the Church was not the light of nature, but of grace. Compare *Irenæus*, v. 20. 1: ‘Ubique enim Ecclesia prædicat veritatem, et hæc est ἐπτάμυξος lucerna, Christi bajulans lumen.’¹

These candlesticks are of gold (cf. Exod. xxv. 31; Zech. iv. 2), as so much else in this Book; the ‘golden girdle’ (i. 13); ‘golden crowns’ (iv. 4); ‘golden vials’ (v. 8); ‘golden censer’ (viii. 3); ‘golden altar’ (ibid.); ‘golden reed’ (xxi. 15); ‘the city of pure gold’ (xxi. 18); ‘the street of the city of pure gold’ (xxi. 21). No doubt the preciousness of all belonging to the Church of God is indicated by the predominant employment of this the costliest and most perfect metal of all. A hint no doubt we have here of this, exactly as in the Ark and furniture of the Ark so much in like manner is of pure gold, the mercy-seat, the cherubim, the dishes, spoons, covers, tongs, snuff-dishes (Exod. xxv. 17, 18, 29, 38), the pot which had manna (Exod. xvi. 33),² everything in short which did not by its bulk and consequent weight abso-

¹ ‘Ἐπτάμυξος is a rare Church word; but ‘myxa’ is in Martial, and the following quotation from him is apt, and tells its own story:

‘Illustrem cum tota meis convivium flammis,
Totque geram myxas, una lucerna vocor.’

² So much is not here said, but that this was a golden pot we learn from Heb. ix. 4; cf. LXX. in loc., and Philo, *Cong. Erud. Gent.* § 18.

lutely preclude this, and even that was for the most part overlaid with gold (Exod. xxv. 10, 11, 23, 24).¹ But the mere costliness of gold, that it was of all metals the rarest, and therefore the dearest, this was not the only motive for the predominant employment of it. Throughout all the ancient East there was a sense of sacredness attached to this metal, such as still to a great extent survives. Thus 'golden' in the Zend-Avesta is throughout synonymous with heavenly or divine. So also in many Eastern lands while silver might be degraded to profane and everyday uses of common life, might as money pass from hand to hand, 'the pale and common drudge 'twixt man and man,' it was not permitted to employ gold in any services except only royal and divine (see Bähr, *Symbolik*, vol. i. pp. 273, 282, 292). The permission to drink out of gold was a special favour vouchsafed to few (1 Macc. xi. 58); so too the permission to wear gold (1 Macc. xiv. 43) is reported as a peculiar honour and privilege.

Ver. 13. '*And in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot.*'—Some translate '*like unto a son of man,*' that is to say, 'like unto a man,' the words merely for them expressing that He who was seen was in human shape, and, so far as the appearance warranted the conclusion, the sharer of a human nature (Ezek. xxxvii. 3, 16; xxxix. 1). The absence of the articles, however, does not require this either here or at xiv. 14; any more than *υἱὸς*

¹ Cocceius: 'Aurum in figuris et symbolicis locutionibus significat id quod est omnium optimum, quod omnia perficit, et a nullo perficitur; sed in se est perfectissimum et purissimum, nullique mutationi obnoxium; quemadmodum aurum omnium metallorum perfectissimum est, et ab aliis non perficitur; sed quibus accedit ea perficit, et nec temporis, nec ignis, omnium destructoris, violentiam injuriamque sentit.'

Θεοῦ (Matt. xxvii. 54) demands to be translated, ‘a son of God,’ or πνεῦμα Θεοῦ, ‘a Spirit of God.’ The beloved Apostle by this ‘*like unto the Son of man*’ would imply that in this sublime apparition he recognized Him whom he had once known on earth, the born of the Virgin Mary; who even in those days of his flesh had claimed to be executor of all judgment, because He was the Son of man (John v. 27; cf. Dan. vii. 13, where this title first appears).—We are again reminded of Daniel’s vision, where in like manner He whom the prophet saw on the banks of Hiddekel was ‘clothed in linen’ (x. 5; xii. 6, 7), or, as it would be more rightly translated, ‘in a long linen garment.’ Ποδήρης, from ποῦς and ἄρειν, the ‘poderis’ of ecclesiastical Latin, is properly an adjective here, with χιτῶν or στολή understood; thus ποδήρης ἔνδυμα, Wisd. xviii. 24, ἀσπίς ποδήρης, Xenophon, *Cyrop.* vi. 2. 10, a shield reaching down to the feet, such as the θυρεός (Ephes. vi. 16), and covering the whole person; see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 50. The long robe or stole is everywhere in the East the garment of dignity and honour (Gen. xxxvii. 3; Mark xii. 38; Luke xv. 22)—the association of dignity with it probably resting originally on the absence of the necessity of labour, and thus of loins girt up, which it seemed to imply: see, on the other hand, 2 Sam. x. 4. The word nowhere else occurs in the New Testament, but several times in the Old; and designates there sometimes the long linen garment common to all the priests, the *chetoneth*, or ‘holy linen coat’ (Lev. xvi. 4; Exod. xxxix. 27), sometimes the High Priest’s ‘robe of the ephod’ (Exod. xxviii. 31; Zech. iii. 4; Wisd. xviii. 24); στολή δόξης, as it is called, Ecclus. xlvi. 7. Yet these passages must not lead us, as they have led some, to regard this as a manifestation of Christ in his *priestly*

character alone. The Rheims version, indeed, renders *ποδήρης* here ‘a priestly garment,’ but has no warrant for this. Any stately garment, any ‘*vestis talaris*,’ may be indicated by the word (Ecclus. xxvii. 8), as for instance, that worn by the Angel of the covenant (Ezek. ix. 2, 3). So too in Isaiah’s magnificent vision (vi. 1), *He* was clothed with a *ποδήρης*, though the word does not there occur, whom the prophet beheld sitting as a King upon his throne, and *whose train filled the temple*. The *ποδήρης*, in fact, is quite as much a kingly garment as a priestly, even as Christ presents Himself here not only as the Priest, but the King, and so far as there is any predominance, more the King than the Priest, ruling in the midst of his Church.

‘*And girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*’—We read in like manner of the Angels who carry out the judgments of God, as ‘having *their breasts* girded with golden girdles’ (xv. 6; cf. Ovid: ‘*cinctæque ad pectora vestes*’). The ordinary girding for one actively engaged was *at the loins* (1 Kin. ii. 5; xviii. 46; Isai. xlv. 1; Jer. i. 17; xiii. 11; cf. Luke xii. 35; Ephes. vi. 14; 1 Pet. i. 13); but Josephus (*Antt.* iii. 7. 2) expressly tells us that the Levitical priests were girt higher up, about the breast, or as it is here ‘*about the paps*’ (*ἐπιζώννυται κατὰ στῆθος*)—favouring, as this higher cincture did, a calmer, more majestic movement (see Braun, *De Vest. Hebr.* p. 402). The girdle, as knitting up into a compact unity all the scattered forces of a man, is often contemplated as the symbol of strength and activity (Isai. xxii. 21; xlv. 5; Jer. xiii. 11; Job xii. 18); and as nothing is so strong as righteousness and truth, therefore the prophet foretells of Messiah, ‘Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins’ (Isai. xi. 5; cf.

Ephes. vi. 14). The girdle here is '*golden*;' not merely with a golden clasp or buckle, as Hengstenberg, relying on 1 Macc. x. 89; xi. 58; xiv. 44, where such appears as the ensign of royalty, would have it; but all of gold; cf. xv. 7; and Dan. x. 5: 'His loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz.' It is quite true that the 'curious girdle' of the High Priest was not golden, but only wrought and interwoven with gold (Exod. xxviii. 8; xxxix. 5); but this, with other departures in this appearance of the Lord from the investiture of the High Priest, only helps to confirm what was just asserted, namely, that we have to do with Him here not as the Priest only, but as also the King, in his Church; for it is in this direction that all the variations tend.

Ver. 14. '*His head and his hairs were white like wool*' [or '*as white wool*,' so the R. V.], '*as white as snow*.'—Cf. Dan. vii. 9: 'The hair of his head was like the pure wool;' wool and snow being joined together on the score of their common whiteness both there and at Isai. i. 18. Those interpreters are altogether astray who see in this whiteness of the Lord's hairs the symbol of age, the hoary head as of the Ancient of Days, which should inspire honour and respect. Clement of Alexandria has not escaped this error (*Pædag.* l. iii. p. 262); nor Augustine (*Exp. ad Gal.* iv. 21): 'Dominus non nisi ob antiquitatem veritatis in Apocalypsi albo capite apparuit;' nor Vitringa, who gives a reference to Lev. xix. 32. That it is an error a moment's consideration must convince. The white hairs of old age are at once the sign and the consequence of the decay of natural strength, in other words, of death commencing; the hair blanching because the blood refuses to circulate any longer in these extremities, as it will one day refuse to circulate in any part of the frame. Being then this token

of decay, how can the white hairs, the hoary head which is the sign of weakness and of the approach of death, be ascribed to Him who, as He is *from* everlasting, so also is He *to* everlasting? Even the Angel at the sepulchre appears as a *νεανισκός*, 'a young man' (Mark xvi. 5; cf. Zech. ii. 4); so in *Paradise Lost* (iv. 845) the cherub is 'severe in youthful beauty;' what then the Angel's Lord (cf. 2 Esdr. ii. 43, 47)? How then shall we explain this hair 'white like white wool'? It is a part of the transfiguration in light of the glorified person of the Redeemer; a transfiguration so complete that it reaches to the extremities, to the very hairs of the head. A comparison with the passage in Daniel, already referred to (vii. 9), will leave no doubt of this. Fire at its highest intensity is *white*; the *red* in fire is of the earth earthy, implies something which the fire has not yet thoroughly subdued and transmuted, while the pure flame is absolutely white. 'Das Weiss ohne alle Beimischung von Finsterniss den reinen absoluten Triumph des Lichtes darstellt' (De-litzsch, on Isai. i. 18). This must be kept in mind whenever we read of white as the colour and livery of heaven.

'And his eyes were as a flame of fire.'—Cf. Dan. x. 6: 'His eyes [were] as lamps of fire.' This too has been understood by some, of the clear-sightedness of Christ, all things being open and manifest to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; thus Vitringa: 'Significat perspicaciam divinæ et puræ mentis omnia arcana pervadentis.' The explanation is insufficient; and Cocceius much better: 'Significat hoc iram ἀπαράιτητον in adversarios.' The words do not say merely that nothing can escape his searching penetrative glance; that 'his eyes behold and his eyelids try the children of men' (Ps. xi. 4); they express

much more than this—the indignation of the Holy One at the discoveries of evil which He thus makes. These ‘*eyes of fire*’ do not merely *look through* the hypocrite and the sinner, but *consume* him, him and his sins together,—unless indeed he will suffer them to consume his sins, that so *he* may live. For indeed in the symbolism of Scripture fire is everywhere the expression of the divine anger; and, seeing that nothing moves that anger but sin, of the divine anger against sin (Gen. xix. 24; Lev. x. 2; Num. xi. 1; xvi. 35; Deut. xxxii. 22; Ps. xi. 6; xxi. 9; l. 3; xcvii. 3; 2 Kin. i. 10, 12; Isai. ix. 18, 19; x. 17; xxx. 27; xxxi. 9; xxxiii. 14; xlvi. 14; lxvi. 15, 16, 24; Ezek. xxxviii. 19, 22; xxxix. 6; Dan. vii. 9, 10; Zeph. i. 18; Mal. iv. 1; Luke ix. 54; xvi. 24; 2 Thess. i. 8; Heb. x. 27; xii. 29; Jude 7; Rev. xi. 5; xx. 9). It need hardly be observed, as confirming this interpretation, that the eyes flashing fire are evermore the utterance, the outward tokens of indignation and wrath; thus Homer (*Il.* xiii. 474): ὀφθαλμῶ δ’ ἄρα οἱ πυρὶ λάμπετον: cf. Lucretius, iii. 290; Virgil, *Æn.* xii. 101, 102; Ovid, *Met.* iii. 33. If any hesitation existed in ascribing this meaning to the symbol here, it must be removed by a comparison with xix. 11, 12. The whole imagery there is of Christ as a man of war coming forth in his anger to fight against and destroy his enemies, and the ‘*eyes as a flame of fire*’ are again ascribed to Him there. In Plato (*Legg.* v. 739 c), we have φωσφόρα ὄμματα.

Ver. 15. ‘*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.*’—For ‘*fine*’ the R. V. has ‘*burnished*,’ and for ‘*as if they burned*,’ ‘*as if it had been refined.*’ The ποδιῶν, reaching, as the name indicates, *to the feet*, yet did not fall so low but that it permitted these to be seen. They were no doubt bare; as were the

feet of the Levitical priesthood ministering in the sanctuary. We are nowhere indeed expressly told of these that they ministered barefoot, but everything leads to this conclusion. Thus, while all other parts of the priestly investiture are described with the utmost minuteness, and Moses is accurately instructed how they should be made, there is no allusion to any covering for the feet. Then again the analogy of such passages as Exod. iii. 5 ; Josh. v. 15 ; Acts vii. 33, and the fact that the *moral* idea of the shoe is that of a protection against the *defilements* of the earth, of which defilements there could be none in the Holy Place, all this irresistibly points to the same conclusion. Plutarch's assertion to the contrary (*Symp.* iv. 6. 2), who ascribes, to the High Priest at least, buskins (*κοθόρνους*), cannot be regarded as of the slightest weight on the other side. It is only one little blunder more, added to the heap of other blunders which he makes about the worship of the Jews ; and over against this we may set the testimony of Juvenal (*Sat.* vi. 158) : ' *Observant ubi festa mero pede sabbata reges.*' Uncovered at all events the feet on the present occasion were ; for St. John seeing, is able to compare them to '*fine brass*'—so we have rendered the word.

Χαλκολίβανος—for there is no reason why we should assume a neuter, *χαλκολίβανον*, for the nominative, as very commonly is done—occurs only here and at ii. 18 ; being, in all probability, a word of St. John's own compounding. It has much perplexed, one might say has hitherto defied, interpreters to give any certain account of it—to do more than guess at its etymology and its meaning. Some have suggested, and the suggestion is as old as Arethas,—it is indeed older, for the Syriac and the Ethiopic Versions assume it,—that we are to find *Λίβανος*,

or Lebanon, in the latter part of the word, and that χαλκολίβανος means 'brass of Mount Lebanon,' such as was there found; or more generally 'mountain-brass,' 'aurichalcum,' as it is in the Vulgate; in the first syllable of which, as need hardly be observed, we are not to find 'aurum,' as though this mixed metal were of *gold* and brass, and the word designating it a hybrid, partly Latin, partly Greek, but ὄρος, 'orichalcum' (Virgil, *Æn.* xii. 87) = ὀρείχαλκος. So one quoted by Wolf: 'Libanus pro monte quolibet, fortasse quod Libanus dederit ejusmodi genus metalli;' which it has been further sought to prove by putting together the promise to Asher, 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass' (Deut. xxxiii. 25), and the fact that Lebanon was within the borders of this tribe. It is hardly fair to urge against this etymology the objection that it violates the law which holds good in Greek composite words, namely, that the more important word should come last, and the merely qualitative first (see Donaldson, *Gr. Gram.* §§ 370, 372); an objection holding good quite as much in our own language, in which 'brass-mountain' would signify something very different from 'mountain-brass,' and 'rose-tree' from 'tree-rose.' It is, I say, hardly fair to urge this, that the word should be rather λιβανόχαλκος than χαλκολίβανος, because the same objection may be urged against every other attempted explanation, including that which seems to me the most probable of all. Another suggestion, first made by Salmasius, and which Ludolf (*Lex. Æthiop.* p. 234) has adopted, to the effect that this mysterious word is a somewhat euphonic form of χαλκοκλίβανος, brass of the furnace (κλίβανος), is scarcely likely to find favour, and is not worthy of any serious notice. As little, I confess, does the solution of the riddle of this word, which Bishop

Wordsworth has allowed (see too Ewald, *Johan. Script.* vol. ii. p. 118), commend itself to me, namely, that the second part of the word is *λίβανος*, frankincense, brass of the colour of frankincense, that is, brass of a dark copper hue; for, to say nothing of the extreme unlikelihood of frankincense being sought out to suggest what the colour was, this part of the description is thus put in direct opposition with all the rest. Everything else is light, fire, of a white shining brightness; the feet must be so as well.

The explanation which satisfies this, as well as other conditions, and commends itself above any other, is one first proposed by Bochart (in a learned disquisition, *De Animal. S. Script.* pars ii. c. xvi. p. 883); and since adopted by Grotius, Vitringa, Hengstenberg, Bleek, and others. Bochart sees in *χαλκολίβανος*, a hybrid formation, the combination of a Greek word and a Hebrew, *χαλκός*, and *לָבַן* = 'albare,' to make white; brass which in the furnace has attained what we call 'white heat.' In this word on a small scale, as in the Apocalypse itself on a larger, the two sacred tongues, Greek and Hebrew, will thus be wonderfully married. If this be the key of the word, it will then exactly correspond to, and the Seer will have intended to express by it, the 'burnished brass' of the feet of the four living creatures (Ezek. i. 7; cf. ver. 27; viii. 2; xl. 3); the 'polished brass' of the feet of Him whom Daniel saw on the banks of Hiddekel (Dan. x. 6), neither 'burnished' nor 'polished' in those passages of our Translation exactly expressing the force of the original; which the LXX by *ἐξαστράπτων* in the first passage, *στίλβων* in the second (the Vulgate has well 'candens' in both), had more precisely seized. If this be correct, the *χαλκολίβανος* will not be the 'fine brass,' of our A. V., nor yet the 'bur-

nished' of the R. V., but the 'glowing brass.'¹ This conclusion is very much strengthened by the epexegetis, 'as if they burned in a furnace;' words of explanation immediately added by St. John, as probably knowing the difficulty which his readers would find in this unusual term. A further confirmation we may draw from a comparison with x. 1, where feet as 'pillars of fire,' which can only be feet as glowing or burning brass, are ascribed to the mighty Angel who there appears. This grand and terrible image sets forth to us Christ in his power to tread down his enemies; at once to tread down and to consume them—'ut potentissimum in conculcandis hostibus' (Marcus).

'And his voice as the sound of many waters.'—Hitherto St. John has trodden closely on the footsteps of Daniel in his delineation of Him whom his eyes beheld; but grand as is the imagery which Daniel offers ('the voice of his words [was] like the voice of a multitude,' Dan. x. 6), the Seer of the New Testament, leaving this, draws now his comparison from another quarter, from Ezek. xliii. 2: 'his voice was like a noise of many waters;' cf. xiv. 2; xix. 6; Ezek. i. 24; Jer. l. 42; Isai. xvii. 12. We may note herein a special characteristic of this wonderful Book. Were it not that the term 'mosaic' always seems to imply, or to suggest, something artificial, we might in many parts liken the Apocalypse to such a costly mosaic; the stones of which, polished and wrought into novel combinations of beauty, have been gathered from all the richest mines of the Old Testament and the New.—By

¹ Of an athlete in perfect health and highest training, Dio Chrysostom says (*Orat.* 28), εἶχε δὲ τὸ χρῶμα ὅμοιον χαλκῷ κεκραμένῳ: but something more is intended here.

this comparison of the voice of the Lord to ‘*the sound of many waters,*’ is not to be understood the ‘*prædicatio Evangelii*’ (Vitringa), but the terribleness of the voice with which He will rebuke his foes within the Church and without.

Ver. 16. ‘*And He had in his right hand seven stars.*’—Cf. ver. 20; ii. 1; iii. 1. How and in what combination we are to conceive that the Lord thus ‘*had in his right hand*’ these ‘*seven stars,*’ has been often asked, and the question variously answered. Was it as so many jewelled rings on the fingers? The threatened rejection of the Laodicean Angel (iii. 16) would then find a remarkable parallel in Jer. xxii. 24: ‘*Though Coniah, king of Judah, were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence.*’ But, not to mention other objections, the *seven stars* would ill distribute themselves on *four* fingers. Better therefore to represent them to our mind’s eye as a wreath or garland which He grasped in his right hand. ‘*The mystery of the seven stars*’ we shall return to before long (ver. 20); and on two occasions shall have need to consider what is the spiritual signification of his having or holding these stars in his right hand (ii. 1; iii. 1); all which may therefore for the present be passed over.

‘*And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*’—Cf. ii. 12; xix. 15; Isai. xlix. 2. ‘*Ρομφαία*, sometimes *ρομβαία*, in artificial Greek-Latin ‘*rhomphaea*,’ but in Latin proper, ‘*rumpia*’ (Ennius, *Annal.* 14 [the passage has not reached us]; Valerius Flaccus, vi. 96), is a Thracian word for a Thracian weapon (A. Gellius, x. 25; cf. Diefenbach, *Origines Europææ*, p. 409). It is properly the ‘*framea*,’ the long and heavy broadsword (*ρομφαία βαρυσίδηπος*, Plutarch, *Æmil. Paul.* 18; cf. Livy, xxxi. 39), with which the Thracians and other barbarous nations

were armed ; very much resembling the Gaelic claymore ; and as such distinguished from the *μάχαιρα*, the sacrificial knife, or short stabbing sword ; though the Septuagint does not recognize any such distinction (Judg. i. 8, 25). The word, occurring six times in the Apocalypse, only occurs once besides in the New Testament (Luke ii. 35). This sword is ‘two-edged’ here (*δίστομος*, cf. Heb. iv. 12, *μάχαιρα δίστομος* = *ἀμφίστομος* = *ἀμφήκης*, Homer, *Il.* x. 256 ; Sophocles, *Antig.* 1212) ; the sharpness of it being reckoned as its mouth ; cf. Heb. xi. 34, *στόματα μαχαίρας*, and Judg. iii. 16 ; Ps. cxlix. 6 ; Prov. v. 4 ; Ecclus. xxi. 4 ; *πρόσωπον μαχαίρας*, Isai. xxxi. 8. The phrase, ‘the devouring sword’ (2 Sam. xviii. 8 ; Isai. i. 20 ; xxxi. 8 ; Jer. ii. 30), rests on the same image. Yet it is not a mere Hebraism ; but may be met in classical Greek poetry, and indeed in Greek prose as well ; thus *δίστομα φύσγανα* (Euripides), *πέλεκυς δίστομος*. As it is from the mouth that man’s word proceeds, so this sword, not wielded in the hand, but proceeding from the mouth, of the Son of God, is his Word (cf. Isai. xlix. 2 : ‘He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword’) ; but his Word as it is also Spirit ; ‘the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God’ (Ephes. vi. 17 ; cf. Heb. iv. 12 ; Isai. xi. 4). They fall short of the full meaning of this emblem, who press mainly as the *tertium comparationis* here the penetrative searching power of the Word of God, amputating our vices, convincing us of our sins ; as does Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* iii. 14) ; Cocceius : ‘Notatur vis verbi in conscientiam ;’ and Henry More (*Mystery of Iniquity*, ii. xiv. 6) : ‘A prophetic symbol of that wonderful contrition of heart that the powerful Word of God makes when sincerely and seasonably evibrated against the enemies of his kingdom.’ The whole feeling and sense of

this passage requires that we should regard this sword from the mouth as expressing rather the *punishing* than the *convincing* power of God's Word; as Delitzsch, on Heb. iv. 12, says well: 'Ein Bild des sichtenden, richtenden, vernichtenden Werkes des Wortes der Worte.' With this sword from his mouth He *fights* against his enemies and destroys them (cf. ii. 12, 16; xix. 15, 21); for the Word of the Lord is no empty threat, but having in readiness to avenge all disobedience (cf. Hos. vi. 5; Isai. xi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8; Wisd. xviii. 15, 16).—Shall we give any spiritual significance to the *two-edgedness* of this sword? Of course it indicates the power which it has to pierce and to penetrate; but many have seen in it more than this; Tertullian for instance (*Adv. Jud.*): 'Bis acutus duobus Testamentis, legis antiquæ, et legis novæ;' cf. Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* cxlix. 6; *De Civ. Dei*, xx. 21. 2; and Richard of St. Victor: 'Qui gladius utrâque parte dicitur acutus, quia in Veteri Testamento amputavit vitia carnalia, in Novo etiam spiritualia. Utrâque parte acutus est, quia qui foris in nobis amputat luxuriam carnis, intus resecat malitiam cordis. Utrâque parte acutus est, quia in his qui contemnunt quæ præcepit, corpus et animam punit. Utrâque parte acutus est, quia malos et a bonis discernit, et singulis quod merentur reddit.' Philo (*De Cher.* 9) likens the Λόγος, thus quick and piercing, to the φλογίνη ῥομφαλα (Gen. iii. 24) with which the Cherubim kept the way of the tree of life.

'And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.'—Of the Angel who stood by the vacant tomb on the Resurrection morn it is said, 'His countenance was like lightning' (Matt. xxviii. 3; cf. Judg. xiii. 6; Dan. x. 6); here the countenance of the Lord is compared to the sun 'in his strength' (cf. x. 1), at his brightest and clearest,

in the splendour of his highest noon, no veil, no mist, no cloud obscuring his brightness (Judg. v. 31). When He shall appear, they that are his shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is; therefore of them too it can be said that in that day 'they shall shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father' (Matt. xiii. 43; cf. Wisd. iii. 7). No doubt if there had been aught in nature brighter than the sun, the Seer would have chosen it to set forth the transcendent and intolerable brightness of that countenance which he now beheld.

This description of the glorified Lord, which has now been brought to a conclusion, sublime as a purely mental conception, but unendurable, if we give it an outward form and expression, and picture Him to ourselves or to others with this sword proceeding from his mouth, these feet as glowing brass, this hair white as wool, and the rest, may suggest a few reflections on the apocalyptic, and generally the Hebrew symbolism, and on the very significant relations of difference and opposition in which it stands to the Greek. Religion and Art for the Greek ran into one another with no very signal preponderance of the claims of the former over the latter. Even in his religious symbolism the sense of beauty, of form, of proportion, overrules every other, and must at all costs find its satisfaction; so that the first necessity of the symbol is that it shall not affront, that it shall satisfy rather, the æsthetic sense. Rather than it should offend this, it would be moulded and modified even to the serious injury of the idea of which it was intended to be the exponent (Renan, *Antechrist*, p. 378). But with the Hebrew symbolism it is altogether different. The first necessity there is that the symbol should set forth truly and fully the religious idea of which it is intended to be the vehicle. Thus the New Jeru-

salem 'lieth foursquare ; the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal' (Rev. xxi. 16). A city, constituting thus a perfect cube, is simply inconceivable to us ; but the divine Seer did not care that we should conceive it ; he was only careful to express the fact that this was a City which should never be moved ; and of this fact the tetragon was the aptest symbol. In the present, as in so many other cases, how the idea would appear when it clothed itself in an outward form and shape, whether it could clothe itself in this at all, and, if it could, whether it would find favour and allowance at the bar of taste, as satisfying the conditions of beauty, this all was a secondary consideration. Nay, we may affirm that this was not a consideration at all ; for indeed, with the one exception of the Cherubim, there was no intention that the symbol should embody itself outwardly, but rather that it should remain ever and only a purely mental conception, the unembodied sign of an idea ;—I may observe, by the way, that no skill of delineation can make the Cherubim themselves other than unsightly objects to the eye. Thus in this present description of Christ, sublime and majestic as it is beyond all conception of ours, it is only such so long as we keep it wholly apart from any external embodiment. Produce it outwardly, the sword going forth from the mouth, the eyes as a flame of fire, the hair white as wool, the feet as molten brass ; and each and all of these images in one way or another violate and offend our sense of dignity and beauty. Bengel, missing this important distinction, has ventured to give a picture of the Lord Jesus according to this description, prefixing it to his German *Commentary on the Apocalypse* ; a picture which is almost degrading, and only not deeply offensive to every sentiment of reverence

and religious awe, because we are sure that it could not have been so intended by this admirable man.¹

The explanation of the difference does not lie altogether in the fact that the Greek created his symbol, and therefore could do what he pleased with his own; while the Hebrew received his from God, and could not therefore venture to touch it. It would have existed more or less without this distinction between the given and the invented, the inspired and uninspired. The unsightliness, often the repulsiveness, of the symbol so long as it is judged merely by the laws of æsthetic beauty, is common to all the religions of the East. What an ugly sight is the ‘Artemis multimammia,’ the Artemis with many breasts, of Ephesus,—an Oriental deity, it need hardly be said, and not a Greek; what monstrous forms the Indian idols, with their many heads and their hundred arms, present; expressing as these many heads do, thought, and these hundred arms, power to embody that thought in act. With all this we should altogether err if we accepted this as the mark of an inferiority of these nations to the Greeks. Inferiority in one aspect no doubt it does indicate, a slighter perception of the beauty of form; but superiority in other and more important matters, a deeper religious earnestness, a feeling upon their part that the essence was above the form, a conviction that *truth*, such as they conceived it, was more than *beauty*, and that

¹ Others have done the same, though with quite a different object and aim. I can perfectly remember seeing exposed in Carlile’s shop-window a blasphemous picture with the title, ‘The God of the Bible,’ or, ‘The God of the Old Testament,’ constructed according to a similar scheme. Two or three days after, a Jew was brought before the magistrates, a ‘zealot,’ who in a righteous indignation had dashed his hand through the window, seized and destroyed it; and I do not think it appeared again.

everything else, as of inferior moment, was to be sacrificed to this.

Ver. 17. ‘*And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead.*’ On this second aorist (ἐπεσα) with a termination of the first, an Alexandrian, and afterwards a Byzantine, form, see Lobeck, *Phrynichus*, p. 724, and Sturz, *De Dialecto Alexandrinâ*, p. 61. See also Westcott’s *New Testament*, p. 164.—This falling, as is evident, is no voluntary act of homage on the part of St. John, but an involuntary expression of the effect produced upon him by that awful vision which he saw. Finding, as it does, its parallel in almost all manifestations of a divine, or even an angelic, presence, it must be owned to contain a mighty, because an instinctive witness for the sinfulness of man’s nature; out of which it comes to pass that any very near revelation from the heavenly world fills the children of men, even the holiest among them, with terror and amazement, yea, sometimes with the expectation of death itself. Examples innumerable make evident that this holds true of good men quite as much as of bad (Gen. iii. 8; xvii. 3; Exod. iii. 6; Num. xvi. 22; xxii. 31; Josh. v. 14; Judg. vi. 22; xiii. 6, 20, 22; 1 Chron. xxi. 20; 2 Chron. vii. 3; Job iv. 12-15; xlii. 5, 6; Isai. vi. 5; Ezek. i. 28; iii. 23; xliii. 3; xlv. 4; Dan. vii. 15; viii. 17; x. 7-9, 15; Tob. xii. 16; Matt. xvii. 6; xxviii. 4, 5; Mark xvi. 5, 8; Luke i. 12, 29; ii. 9; v. 8; xxiv. 5; John xviii. 6; Acts ix. 4; x. 4). The unholy, and all flesh is such, cannot endure immediate contact with the holy, the human with the divine. Heathen legend, so far as the homage of its testimony may be accepted, consents here with Christian truth. Semele must perish, if Jupiter reveals himself to her in his glory, being consumed in the brightness of that glory; cf. Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20: ‘Thou

canst not see my face; for there shall no man see Me, and live.' And for examples in art of this overwhelming terror as an accompaniment of all very near revelations of the higher world, see such passages as these in Virgil, *Æn.* ii. 774; iii. 29, 30; 47, 48; 175; iv. 279, 280; vii. 458, 459; xii. 867. For *every* man it is a dreadful thing to stand face to face with God. The beloved disciple, who looked upon, and whose hands had handled, the Word of life (1 John i. 1), who had lain in his Lord's bosom in the days of his flesh, could as little as any other endure the revelation of his majesty, or do without that '*Fear not,*' with which that Lord at once reassures him.

'*And He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not.*'—'*Unto me*' should be omitted. This same '*Fear not*' is uttered on similar occasions to Daniel (x. 12), to Peter (Luke v. 1), to the Three at the Transfiguration, of whom John himself was one (Matt. xvii. 7); to the holy women at the sepulchre (Matt. xxviii. 5; Mark xvi. 6). Nor is this reassurance confined to words only; the Lord at the same time lays his hand upon him,—something parallel to which goes along with more than one '*Fear not*' of those referred to just now (cf. Jer. i. 9; Isai. vi. 7); and from the touch of that hand the Seer receives strength again, and is set, no doubt, upon his feet once more (Ezek. i. 28; ii. 1, 2; Acts xxvi. 16). The *right* hand being ever contemplated in Scripture as the hand of power alike for God (Deut. xxxiii. 2; Isai. xlvi. 13; Acts vii. 55) and for man (Gen. xlvi. 14; Zech. iii. 1; Matt. v. 30), it is only fit that with the *right* hand of the Lord he should be thus strengthened and revived (cf. Isai. xli. 10).

'*I am the first and the last.*'—This prerogative is three times claimed for the Lord Jehovah in Isaiah (xli. 4; xlv.

6; xlviii. 12); and in like manner three times in this Book (here, and ii. 8; xxii. 13). It is the expression of absolute Godhead: 'I am the first and the last, and beside Me there is no God' (Isai. xlv. 6). He is from eternity to eternity, so that there is no room for any other. All creation comes forth from Him (John i. 1-3), all creation returns to Him again, as from whom and by whom and to whom are all things. Not the semi-Socinian expositors alone, as Grotius and Wetstein, but others who lie under no such suspicion, Cocceius for instance, and Vitranga, have here gone astray, making '*first*' to mean the first in glory, and '*last*' the last in humiliation; 'I am He who, being the foremost and first in all honour, became the lowest and last in dishonour, sounding the lowest depths of ignominy and shame.' This, which itself is true (Phil. ii. 7, 8), is yet not the truth of this place. That truth is nobly expressed in the comment of a mediæval theologian, Richard of St. Victor, more than once quoted already: 'Ego sum primus et novissimus. Primus per creationem, novissimus per retributionem. Primus, quia ante Me non est formatus Deus; novissimus, quia post Me alius non erit. Primus, quia a Me sunt omnia; novissimus, quia ad Me sunt omnia; a Me principio, ad Me finem. Primus, quia Ego sum causa originis; novissimus, quia Ego iudex et finis.'

Ver. 18. '*I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen.*'—Translate rather '*And the living One, and I became dead, and behold, I am living for evermore.*' Gain, as it appears to me, will thus accrue to every clause of the sentence. In the first place, *καί*, connecting this verse so closely with the one preceding, will have its rights, which are wholly overlooked in our Version. Then *ὁ ζῶν* expresses not so much that

He, the speaker, 'lived,' as that He was 'the Living One,' the Life (John i. 4; xiv. 6), *αὐτοζωή*, having life in Himself, and being the fountain and source of life to others; *ὁ τῆς ἀπέριου πρῦτανις ζωῆς*, as Clement of Alexandria grandly calls Him (*Quis Div. Salv.* 25). It is true that in one sense it is the exclusive prerogative of the Father to have life in Himself, but a prerogative which He has communicated with the Son (John v. 26); of Him too it may be said, in the words of the Psalmist, *παρὰ Σοὶ πηγὴ ζωῆς* (Ps. xxxvi. 10, LXX.). To Him belongs *absolute being* (*ὄντως εἶναι*), as contrasted with the *relative being* of the creature, with the life which may be no life, seeing that it inevitably falls under the dominion of corruption and death, so soon as it is separated from Him, the source from which it was derived; for others may *share*, but He only *hath*, immortality (1 Tim. vi. 16), being *ὄσις ἀθάνατος, οὐ μετουσίᾳ* (Theodoret). All this is included in Christ's assertion here of Himself as *ὁ ζῶν*. Being thus The Living One, He goes on to say, 'I yet *became* (*ἐγενόμην*) *dead*; I the source of all life stooped even to taste of death.' Such is the second clause, and then follows the glorious third. 'This state of death endured for Me but for an instant. I laid down my life that I might take it again. I drank of the brook in the way, and therefore have I lifted up my head (Ps. cx. 7); death has now in Me been so swallowed up in life, that *behold, I am living for evermore.*'

'*And have the keys of hell and of death.*'—We should read rather '*of death and of hell,*' for so all the best MSS. and Versions have it, while the reading of our Translation inverts the natural and logical order; for it is death which peoples hell or Hades; it is a king Death who makes possible a kingdom of the dead (vi. 8; xx. 13, 14);

for by 'hell,' or Hades, this invisible kingdom or dominion of the dead is intended, and that in all its extent, not merely in one dark province of it, the region assigned to the lost. Hengstenberg indeed affirms in his own confident way that 'death' here means the second death, and as a consequence that 'hell,' or Hades, can mean only gehenna; observing that in the New Testament this second death is alone set forth as an object of fear. But why is it that the other death, itself the outward sign and seal of God's extreme indignation against sin, has ceased to be an object of terror, has been robbed for the faithful of its sting? Why, except for that fact which we find proclaimed in these words, namely, that the Son of God has gone down into the dark realm of shadows and returned from it again—and not this only, but returned from it a conqueror, having overcome death, and burst, like another Samson (Judg. xvi. 3), the gates of the city of the grave which shut Him in; and in pledge of this having the keys of both, the absolute Lord who opens and shuts them at his will for all the children of men. For myself I cannot doubt, above all when I look at the words which immediately go before, that Christ sets Himself forth here as the overcomer of death natural; which it must always be remembered is rather death *unnatural*; for man was made for immortality (Gen. ii. 17), and death is the denial and reversal of the true law of his creation (Rom. v. 12; Wisd. i. 13-16). He who is the Prince of life is indeed but saying here what already He had been bold to say, while the victory was yet unwon: 'I am the Resurrection, and the Life' (John xi. 25); life, that is, in conflict with death, and overcoming it. The keys are the emblems of authority (cf. iii. 7); to have the keys is to have the power of Himself going in and out as He pleases,

of admitting and excluding, shutting up and delivering others: cf. Deut. xxxii. 39, 'I kill and I make alive;' and 1 Sam. ii. 6. The metaphor rests on the conception of Hades as a city with walls and gates; Christ had spoken in his earthly life of the 'gates of hell' (Matt. xvi. 18; cf. Isai. xxxviii. 10; Job xxxviii. 17; Ps. cvii. 18).

Let me express here, before leaving this subject, the regret which all who have thoughtfully compared our Version with the original must feel that the one word 'hell' covers in it two words so different in meaning as *ᾅδης* and *γέεννα*, the first 'Sheol,' the gathering-place of all departed souls (Prov. xxvii. 20), the second the *λίμνη τοῦ πυρός* of this Book (xix. 20; xx. 10), the final abode of the lost. All must lament the manifold confusions which out of this have arisen; the practical loss, indeed, among our people of any doctrine about Hades at all. In the R. V. the error is corrected; but who can measure the years which must pass before the correction of the error makes itself popularly felt among us, if ever it does this? The relations of *ᾅδης* to *γέεννα*, and also to *παράδεισος*, are well put in this extract from a funeral sermon of Jeremy Taylor: 'The word "*Αιδης*" signifies indefinitely the state of separation, whether blessed or accursed; it means only "the invisible place," or the region of darkness, whither whoso descends shall be no more seen. For as among the heathens the Elysian fields and Tartara are both ἐν "*Αιδου*,"¹ so among the Jews and Christians *paradisus* and *gehenna* are the distinct states of *Hades*.' Compare König, *Die Lehre von Christi Höllenfahrt*, 1842,

¹ As witness the lines of the comic poet:

*καὶ γὰρ καθ' Ἀιδην δύο τρίβους νομίζομεν,
μίαν δικαίων, χατέραν ἀσεβῶν ὁδόν.*

a very complete monograph on its subject ; and an article *Niedergefahren zur Hölle*, by Laible, in the *Zeitschrift für Luth. Theol.* 1863, pp. 22-92.

Ver. 19. ‘*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*’—It was certainly a piece of carelessness on the part of our Translators to have omitted, which none of the previous translators had done, the *οὖν* (‘*Write therefore*’), about the right of which to a place in the text no question has been ever made. With what intention the illative particle is used, is not so easy to determine ; perhaps it is best referred to what goes immediately before : ‘*Seeing that I am this mighty One, the first and last, who was dead and am alive, do thou therefore write ; for the things declared by Me are all steadfast and sure.*’

Ver. 20. ‘*The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and of the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the Angels of the seven Churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches.*’—We may either regard the first sentence as governed by the ‘*Write*’ of the verse preceding ; so no doubt our Translators, who place only a comma at the conclusion of that verse ; or else, placing a full-stop there, regard these words as a sort of nominative absolute, the *statement* of the ‘*mystery*,’ or spiritual riddle, of which the solution follows in the latter half of the verse—a distribution which to my mind seems preferable to the other.—A ‘*mystery*’ in the constant language of Scripture is something which man is capable of knowing, but only when it has been revealed to him by God (Matt. xiii. 11 ; Rom. xi. 25 ; Ephes. vi. 19 ; 1 Cor. xiii. 2), and not through any searching of his own. Thus ‘*mystery*’ and ‘*revelation*,’ *μυστήριον* and *ἀποκάλυψις*, are correlative terms (Rom.

xvi. 25); and as in the former clauses of the present verse there is the *μυστήριον*, so in the latter the *ἀποκάλυψις μυστηρίου*. From this, the revelation of the mystery, we learn that ‘*the seven stars are the Angels of the seven Churches.*’ In all the typical language of Scripture stars are symbols of lordship and authority, ecclesiastical or civil. Thus a star is the symbol of the highest dominion of all: ‘There shall come a *Star* out of Jacob’ (Num. xxiv. 7); and the actual birth of Him whom Balaam prophesied of here, is announced by a star (Matt. ii. 2; cf. Isai. xiv. 12). Faithful teachers are stars that shall shine for ever (Dan. xii. 3); false teachers are wandering stars (Jude 13), or stars which fall from heaven (Rev. viii. 10; vi. 13; xii. 4). But only when we know exactly what ‘*the Angels of the seven Churches*’ mean, shall we feel perfectly sure that we have interpreted the ‘*stars*’ aright; or rather that we have apprehended aright the interpretation of them given here by the Spirit.

These ‘*Angels*’ have given rise to much discussion and debate. Some have understood by them the *heavenly* messengers who bear this name. They urge that, often elsewhere in this Book as the word ‘Angel’ recurs, it is never employed in any other sense; therefore that in these we are to recognize the guardian Angels over the several Churches, ‘their Angels;’ that if single persons had thus their Angels (Matt. xviii. 10; cf. Acts xii. 15), much more the same might be predicated of Churches (Dan. xii. 1). Thus Origen (*Hom. xiii. in Luc.*): ‘Si audacter expedit loqui Scripturarum sensum sequenti, per singulas Ecclesias bini sunt Episcopi, alius visibilis, alius invisibilis; ille visui carnis, hic sensui patens. Et quomodo homo, si commissam sibi dispensationem bene egerit, laudatur a Domino, si male, culpæ et vitio subjacet, sic et Angelus.’

And again (*Hom. xx. in Num.*): ‘Secundum ea quæ Johannes in Apocalypsi scribit, unicuique Ecclesiæ generaliter Angelus præest, qui vel collaudatur pro bene gestis populi, vel etiam pro delictis ejus culpatur. In quo etiam stupendi mysterii admiratione permoveor, quod intantum Deo cura de nobis sit, ut etiam Angelos suos culpari pro nobis et confutari patiatur. Sic enim cum pædagogo traditur puer, si forte minus dignis, nec secundum paternam nobilitatem imbutus appareat disciplinis, continuo culpa ad pædagogum refertur, nec ita puer a patre ut pædagogus arguitur.’ Cf. Jerome (*In Mich.* vi. 1, 2), who here follows close in the footsteps of Origen.

The preoccupation of an obvious objection is in the words just quoted ingeniously attempted, but not successfully accomplished. Indeed the objection is one which it is impossible to surmount: this, namely, How could *holy* Angels be charged with such delinquencies as are laid to the charge of some of the Angels here (ii. 4; iii. 1, 15)? There are some good observations on this point in Augustine (*Ep.* 43, § 22): ‘Angelo Ecclesiæ Ephesi scribe; Quod si de Angelo superiorum cœlorum, et non de præpositis Ecclesiæ vellet intelligi, non consequenter diceret: Sed habeo adversum te, quod caritatem primam reliquisti. Hoc de superioribus Angelis dici non potest, qui perpetuam retinent caritatem, unde qui defecerunt et lapsi sunt, diabolus est et angeli ejus.’ Moreover, as Röhre well asks, if these Angels are *heavenly* ones, what meaning would the injunction ‘Write’ in this case possess (*Anfänge der Kirche*, p. 423)?

This then of the ‘Angels’ meaning *heavenly* Angels may certainly be dismissed. All which Alford has urged in its favour will fail to produce any wide acceptance for it. The Angel must be some person or persons in the

Church on earth, not one overlooking it from heaven. I say some person *or persons*, not as myself thinking it possible that he can represent a plurality, but having in view explanations which by some have been offered, and on which something will need to be said.

But if some human person in the Church, who but the chief shepherd, in other words, the bishop? To whom else would all which we here in these Epistles find ascribed to the Angel apply? For myself, I cannot but think that the argument for the existence of the episcopate in the later apostolic times, and that as a divinely recognized institution, which may be drawn from the position of the Angels in the several Churches, and from the language in which they are addressed, is exceedingly strong. The Angel in each Church is one; but surely none can suppose for an instant that there was only one presbyter, or other minister serving in holy things, for the whole flourishing Church of Ephesus, or of Smyrna; and that we are in this way to account for the single Angel of the several Churches. Thirty years before this time St. Paul had uttered his parting words at Miletus to the elders of the Ephesian Church (Acts xx. 17), and certainly addressed them even then as many (ver. 25). Taking into account what we know of the spread of the Christian faith in these parts during the intermediate time, it is probable that their number was at this time largely increased. And yet, numerous as by this time the presbyters must have been, there is only one Angel in each of these Churches. What can he be but a bishop?—a bishop too with the prerogatives which we ascribe to one. His preëminence cannot be explained away, as though he had been merely a ruling elder, *primus inter pares*, with only such authority and jurisdiction as the others, his peers, may have agreed

to lend him. For the great Bishop of souls who is here on his spiritual visitation, everywhere holds the Angel responsible for the spiritual condition of his Church ; for the false teaching which he has not put down, for the false teachers whom he has not separated off from the communion of the faithful,—in short, for every disorder in doctrine or discipline which has remained unrepressed. But Christ could not so deal with them, could not charge them personally with these negligences and omissions, unless upon the ground that they had been clothed with power and authority sufficient to prevent them, so that these evils could only exist through their neglect or connivance.

I am very far from affirming that bishops were commonly called Angels in the primitive Church ; or called so at all, except with a more or less conscious reference to this use of the word in the Apocalypse. There is a certain mysteriousness, and remoteness from the common language of men, in the adoption of this term, and such there is intended to be. It belongs to the enigmatic symbolic character of the Book, elevated in its language throughout above the level of daily life. Those to whom this title is ascribed are herein presented to the Church as clothed with a peculiar dignity, and are herein themselves reminded that they stand before One, whose ministries of grace and love they should be swift to fulfil on earth, even as those whose names they bear are swift to fulfil them in heaven. There is then a certain, though very partial right in what Origen taught ; and ‘ Angel ’ is a heavenly title here ; but a heavenly title which has been borrowed by earth, which has been transferred and applied to men ; a transfer not without its analogies in the Old Testament (Eccles. v. 6 ; Hagg. i. 13 ; Mal. ii. 7 ; iii. 1) ; and rendered more easy by the fact that Angel is a name not designating the

personality, but only the *office*, of those heavenly beings by whom it properly is borne. Thus the author of the Commentary once ascribed to Augustine: ‘Nam quia etiam Angelus nuntius interpretatur, quicumque aut episcopus, aut presbyter, aut etiam laicus frequenter de Deo loquitur, et quomodo ad vitam æternam perveniatur annunciat, merito angelus Dei dicitur.’

It is nothing wonderful that those who maintain the government of the Church to have been presbyterian at the first, and who see in the episcopate a result of declension from apostolic purity, and of the springing up of a sinful *φιλοπρωτεύειν* (3 John 9) in the Church, should refuse to accept these conclusions. At the same time they are far from being at one in the method whereby they have sought to escape the argument for primitive episcopacy which we believe that we are here justified in finding.

Thus some affirm that the Angel is not any one person, but stands for and represents the whole body of the *προεστῶτες*, the collective presbytery, contemplated and addressed as this single person. So for the most part the early anti-episcopal Protestants, Brightman for example. That such commentators as Hengstenberg have been able to satisfy themselves with such an explanation, has always filled me with wonder. The mere statement that the Angel means ‘das gesammte Kirchenregiment’ (his own words), seems to involve its own condemnation. Vitringa (*De Synag. Vet.* p. 911) with more candour mentions this explanation only to reject it, and finds a clear testimony here for the superior dignity of one in these several Churches; though naturally the episcopate which he thus recognizes is of the mildest form, of the Ussherian type; and Beza in like manner glosses τῷ ἀγγέλῳ, i. e. προε-

στῶτι; though, curiously enough, he considers that the upgrowth of the tyrannous hierarchy of Rome is evidence sufficient that, however there were these *προεστῶτες* in the apostolic Churches, it was never intended of God that such should always continue.

But those who are determined that at any rate there shall be no bishop here, are not all agreed among themselves how they shall get rid of him; and this resolving of the Angel into a presbyterian board has appeared to some, to Ebrard for instance, so poor an escape from the embarrassment, that they have devised another, but if possible a poorer still. The explanation they offer rests on the entirely gratuitous assumption that the seven Churches had sent *their* messengers to St. John at Patmos, therefore called the '*Angels* (cf. Luke ix. 52) *of the Churches*,' as having been sent by them. These in these Epistles are now successively addressed, that they may carry back his word, or rather the word of Christ, to the congregations from which they had been deputed. But in answering a letter by a messenger, men write *by* him, they do not usually write *to* him; nor is it easy to see where is the correspondency between such messengers, subordinate officials of the Churches, and stars; or what the '*mystery*' of the relation between them then would be; or how the Lord should set forth as an eminent prerogative of his, that He held the seven stars, that is, the seven messengers, in his right hand (ii. 1). The scheme breaks down at every point, and among many lame and impotent explanations must needs be regarded as the lamest and most impotent of all.

I will take the opportunity of a pause between this, the Introduction to the seven Epistles, and the seven Epistles

themselves, to say a few needful words on the mystery of the number seven; which only I have left unsaid so long, because unwilling to interrupt the exposition by any thing in the shape of a dissertation; not to say that I found it difficult to attach particularly to any one of those important sevens which have already occurred, considerations which properly belonged to them all.

Even the most careless reader of the Apocalypse must be struck with the manner in which almost every thing there is ordered by sevens. Thus, besides the seven Churches, and their seven Angels, we have already in this first chapter the seven Spirits (ver. 4), the seven candlesticks (ver. 12), the seven stars (ver. 16); and further on, seven lamps of fire (iv. 4), seven seals (v. 1), seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb (v. 6), seven heavenly Angels with their seven trumpets (viii. 2), seven thunders (x. 3), seven heads of the dragon, and seven crowns upon these heads (xii. 3), the same of the beast rising out of the sea (xiii. 1), seven last plagues (xv. 1), seven vials (xv. 7), seven mountains (xvii. 9), seven kings (xvii. 10); not to speak of other recurrences, not so obvious, of this number seven as the signature of the Book; as, for instance, the distribution of the entire Book into seven visions, the seven-fold ascription of glory to the Lamb (v. 12), and to God (vii. 12).

But indeed the recurrence, and, I shall seek to show, the symbolic dignity of the number seven runs through the whole of Scripture from first to last,—to say nothing of the echoes of this sense of its significance which abound in every religion of heathendom;¹ and if this is

¹ ‘Die allgemeine Heiligkeit der Siebenzahl haben die Alten schon in allen Beziehungen bemerkt’ (Creuzer, *Symbolik*, vol. ii. p. 161, where see a large collection of the literature on the subject).

more strongly marked in the Apocalypse than in any other book of Scripture, it is only that this, like so much else, has culminated here. Should it be asked, What is the special significance, and what the sacredness and peculiar dignity of seven, and of what is it the signature? the answer is not very hard to give. A careful induction from all the passages where this number cannot be regarded as fortuitous, but is evidently of Divine ordinance and appointment (I call fortuitous such sevens as occur, Acts xix. 14; xx. 6), will leave no doubt that it claims throughout Scripture to be considered as the covenant number, the sign and signature of God's covenant relation to mankind, and above all to that portion of mankind with which this relation is not potential merely, but actual, namely, the Church.

The evidences of this reach back to the very beginning. We meet them first in the hallowing of the seventh day, in pledge and token of the covenant of God with man (Gen. ii. 3; cf. Ezek. xx. 12).¹ So too circumcision, being the sign of a covenant, is accomplished on the eighth, or after seven days (Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 3). And as seven is the signature of God's covenant with man, so of all man's covenants with his fellows, resting as these do, and must, on the anterior covenant with God; thus of treaties of peace (Gen. xx. 20), of marriages (Judg. xiv.

¹ It was therefore a true instinct of hatred against a divine institution which led those who in the first French Revolution proclaimed the abolition of the Christian religion, to make war also on the Christian week, the distribution of time by sevens, and to substitute that by decades in its stead. They felt that here was a witness for God in the world, a witness that He was the measurer out of our times to us, and of our duty to sanctify to Him the times that He had thus measured out, which must not be allowed to continue.

12). Nor should it be left unnoticed that the word seven is bound up in the Hebrew word signifying an oath, or a covenant confirmed with an oath. Seven is the number of sacrifice, by aid of which the covenant, once established, is continually maintained in its first vigour and strength, and the relations between God and man, which sin is evermore disturbing, and threatening to bring to an end, are restored (1 Kin. viii. 65; 2 Chron. xxix. 21; Job xlii. 8; cf. Num. xxiii. 1, 14, 29). It is the number of purification and consecration, as the fruit of the sacrifice (Lev. iv. 6, 17; viii. 11, 33; xiv. 9, 51; xvi. 14, 19; Num. xix. 12, 19), of forgiveness (Matt. xviii. 21, 22; Luke xvii. 4). Then, again, seven is the number of every grace and benefit bestowed upon Israel; these being thus marked as flowing out of the covenant and resulting from it (2 Kin. iv. 35). The priests compass Jericho seven days, and on the seventh day seven times, that all Israel may know that the city is given into their hands by their God; and that its conquest is a direct and immediate result of their covenant relation to Him (Josh. vi. 4, 15, 16; Heb. xi. 30). It is the number of reward to those that are faithful in the covenant (Deut. xxviii. 7; 1 Sam. ii. 5; Prov. xxiv. 16; Eccus. xxxii. 13); of punishment to those who are froward in the covenant (Lev. xxvi. 21, 24, 28; Num. xii. 14, 15; Deut. xxviii. 25; 2 Sam. xii. 18; xxi. 6; xxiv. 13), or to those who injure the people in it (Gen. iv. 15, 24; Ps. lxxix. 12; Exod. vii. 25); or again of punishment, regarded in the light of a making of amends, a readjusting of the disturbed balances of justice, and so a restoring of harmony between the sinner and the outraged law of God (Prov. vi. 31; Eccus. vii. 3; xl. 8). All the feasts, as is obvious, are ordered by seven, or else by seven multiplied into seven (7×7), and so made intenser still. Thus, not to

recur again to the Sabbath, the mother of all feasts, it is with the Passover (Exod. xii. 15, 16), the feast of weeks (Deut. xvi. 9), of tabernacles (Deut. xvi. 13, 15), the sabbath-year (Lev. xxv. 2, 3; Deut. xv. 1), and the jubilee (Lev. xxv. 8);¹ thus also with Solomon's feast of dedication (1 Kin. viii. 65; cf. 2 Chron. xxx. 22, 23).

Further we may observe that wherever God is at work in the history of other nations outside of the covenant, while yet He would make it plainly to appear that it is for Israel's sake, and having respect to the covenant, that He is so working, this signature of seven in his dealing with those nations is never wanting. Thus it is the number of the years of plenty and of the years of famine, in sign that these were sent not so much for Egypt's sake, as for Israel's, and as conducing to the divine preparation through which the chosen people were to pass (Gen. xli. 26, 27). Naaman is to wash in Jordan seven times, that he may acknowledge in the God of Israel the author of his cure (2 Kin. v. 10). Seven times pass over Nebuchadnezzar, that he may learn in his abasement that the God of his Jewish captives is indeed the King over all the earth (Dan. iv. 16, 23, 25). But the subject is inexhaustible, the significance of the number seven meeting us at every turn in Scripture. When St. Jude reminds us that Enoch, in whom the patriarchal piety reached its highest bloom, was 'the seventh from Adam' (ver. 14), it is surely something more than a mere genealogical notice which he is giving;² as certainly it is not by accident that in Lamech,

¹ See Philo, *De Sentenario, De Abrah.* § 5; and again *Legg. Alleg.* § 4, the passage beginning *χαίρει ἡ φύσις ἑβδομάδι*, and indeed his works, throughout, on the *ἑπὰ ἑβδομάς*, as he constantly calls it. Compare Gfrörer, *Alexandr. Theosoph.* vol. ii. pp. 98 sqq.

² Gregory of Nyssa (*In Verb. Faciam Hom. Orat.* 2): ἑβδομος

he too the seventh from Adam, the impiety of the apostate race of Cain reached its highest height (Gen. iv. 23). Who again will venture to affirm it an accident that there are seven beatitudes, seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, that the parables in Matthew xiii. are seven, that the woes denounced in twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew against the Pharisees are seven,¹ that the Lord spake seven words from his cross, that by seven words He brought his discourse with the Samaritan woman to its glorious termination (John iv. 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, 26)? St. Matthew ascribes such a virtue to the number, that, as might almost seem, he employs a certain violence that he may distribute our Lord's genealogy into three groups of fourteen, that is, of double sevens (i. 17).

Leaving then the *fact*, which is sufficiently evident, let us inquire into the *reason* of the fact. To the question, *Why* does seven take this place, what are the grounds of its adoption to this high dignity and honour, the answer is not very difficult to give. It is true that in all speculations upon numbers we may very profitably lay to heart the wise caution of Fuller,² clothed, as is ever the case with his wisdom, in witty words: 'For matter of numbers fancy is never at a loss, like a beggar never out of his way, but hath some haunts where to repose itself. But such as in expounding of Scripture reap more than God did sow there, never eat what they reap thence, because such grainless husks, when seriously threshed out, vanish all into chaff.'

ἀπὸ γενέσεως οὐκ εἶδε θάνατον Ἐνώχ, μυστήριον ἐκκλησίας. He has much of interest on the mystery of seven.

¹ In our Authorized Version they are eight; but the woe of verse 14 has been brought here by transcribers, who have transferred it from Mark xii. 40 and Luke xx. 47. It has here no proper place.

² *A Pisgah Sight of Palestine*, b. iii. c. 6.

And yet I feel very sure that in this matter which is now before us, we need not fear lest we should be threshing barren ears, with only chaff for our pains.

To the question then asked above it may be replied by first calling attention to the fact that the number seven results from the combination of three and four; for we may observe that whenever this sacred seven falls of itself, or is divided, into two groups, it is never into five and two, or six and one; but always into three and four, or four and three; thus the Lord's Prayer (Matt. vi. 9-15) contains three *εὐχαί*, having to do with the glory of God, and four *αἰτήματα*, relating to the needs of men; while on the other hand the seven parables of Matthew xiii. are divided into groups; first of four, spoken on the sea-side and to the multitude (ver. 1), and then of three, spoken after a considerable pause in the house and to the disciples (ver. 36). It is the same in this Book with the trumpets (viii. 13), and the vials (xvi. 3-7). But can it be shown that this three and four in Scripture have severally any symbolic significance of their own? Assuredly yes: three, the signature of God; four, that of the world; and thus seven, or these numbers brought into contact and relation, the token and signature of the covenant between the two.

That three is the number of God, of the ever-blessed Trinity, this of itself needs no proof. And it is so recognized in Scripture. There are vestiges of this in the Old Testament; in the three mysterious angel-visitors who appear to Abraham in the plains of Mamre (Gen. xviii. 1) in the blessing as from three distinct persons, Num. vi. 24-26; in the *Trisagion* of Isai. vi. 3; in the prominent position assumed throughout by the Angel of the Covenant, hereafter to be acknowledged as the second Person of the

Trinity; in the often mention not of God, but of *the Spirit* of God, hereafter to be acknowledged as the third Person therein (Gen. i. 2; Ps. li. 11). These footprints of the Trinity are purposely more or less obscure, and only clear when they are traced in the light of a later revelation; for the office of the Church of the Old Testament was to guard the truth of the unity of the Godhead, not to declare the Trinity; which, indeed, so long as polytheism was not overcome, but still had its roots even in the minds and hearts of the chosen people itself, could not yet have been safely declared. Here is explanation amply sufficient of the reserve with which the number three is employed in the Old Testament as the signature of Deity; the reason why this is only perfectly plain and clear in the New (Matt. xxviii. 19; 1 John v. 7).

Four, the next number to three, and growing immediately out of it, is the signature of the world—of the world, not indeed as a rude undigested mass, but as a *κόσμος*, as the revelation, so far as nature can be the revelation, of God. Four is stamped everywhere on this organized world. Thus, not to speak of the four elements, the four seasons, neither of which are recognized in Scripture, we have there the four winds (Ezek. xxxvii. 9; Dan. vii. 2; Matt. xxiv. 31; Rev. vii. 1); the four corners of the earth (Isai. xi. 12; Ps. cvii. 3; Rev. vii. 1; xx. 8); the four living creatures, emblems of all creaturely life (Rev. iv. 6), and each of these with four faces and four wings (Ezek. i. 5, 6); the four beasts coming up from the sea, and representing the four great world-empires which in the providence of God should succeed one another (Dan. vii. 3); the four metals composing the image which sets forth the same phases of empire (Dan. ii. 32, 33); the four forms of the judgments of God, namely the sword,

the famine, the pestilence, the wild beasts (Rev. vi. 8; Jer. xv. 3); the four Gospels, or the four-sided Gospel (*εὐαγγέλιον τετράγωνον*, as one called it of old), in sign of its destination for all the world; the sheet tied at the four corners (Acts x. 11; xi. 5);¹ the four carpenters, and the four horns, the sum total of the forces of the world as arrayed against the Church (Zech. i. 18, 20); the enumeration, wherever this is wished to be exhaustive, of the inhabitants of the world by four, kindreds, tongues, peoples, and nations (Rev. v. 9; cf. vii. 9; x. 11; xi. 9; xiv. 6; xvii. 15). For other significant enumerations by four, see Ezek. xiv. 21; Matt. xv. 31; Rev. vi. 8; John v. 3. Of the number twelve, which is also obtained by aid of three and four, but by these in another combination (not as $3 + 4$, but as $3 \times 4 = 12$) there is no need here to speak. It is only in later parts of the Book that its full significance appears (vii. 5; xxi. 12; xxii. 2, and elsewhere).

There are reasons then amply sufficient why seven, being thus, as it is, made up of three and four, should be itself the signature of the covenant. No mere accident or caprice dictated the selection of it. And if this be the number of the covenant, then we can account for its constant recurrence in this Book; for admitting, as few would refuse to do, that the idea of God's covenant with his Church as the key to all history, comes to its head in the Apocalypse, it is nothing wonderful that this Book should be more markedly ordered by seven, and have this num-

¹ Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. ci. Serm. iii.*): 'Discus qui quatuor lineis continebatur orbis terrarum erat in quatuor partibus. Has quatuor partes sæpe Scriptura commemorat, orientem et occidentem, aquilonem et meridiem. Ideo quia totus orbis per Evangelium vocabatur, quatuor Evangelia conscripta sunt.'

ber stamped upon it even more strongly, than any other portion of Scripture.¹

¹ On this whole subject of the symbolic worth and dignity of numbers in Scripture, see Bähr, *Symbolik des Mos. Cultus*, vol. i. pp. 128-209; Züllig, *Offenb. Johannis Erklärt*, vol. i. pp. 115-127; Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 2nd edit. p. 225; in Herzog, *Encyclopædie*, art. Zahlen; and Kurtz, *Theoll. Stud. u. Krit.* 1844, pp. 315-370.

THE SEVEN EPISTLES.

REV. ii. iii.

BEFORE proceeding to consider these seven Epistles in detail, it may be well worth while to invite the reader's attention to the symmetry, to what we should call in any human composition the remarkable art, to be traced in the construction of them all: quite justifying the words of Henry More: 'There never was a book penned with that artifice as this of the Apocalypse.' They are all constructed precisely on the same model. They every one of them contain—

a. A command in exactly the same terms to the Seer that he should write to the Angel of the Church.

β. One or more glorious titles which Christ claims for Himself, as exalting the dignity of his person, and thus adding weight and authority to the message which He sends; these titles being in almost every case drawn more or less evidently from the attributes ascribed to Him, or claimed by Him, in the manifestation of Himself which has just gone before (i. 4-20).

γ. The actual message from Christ to the Angel of the Church, declaring his intimate knowledge of its condition, good, or bad, or mixed, with a summons to steadfastness in the good, to repentance from the evil—all this brought home by the fact that He was walking up and down in

the midst of his Churches, having in readiness to punish, and also no less to reward.

δ. A promise to the faithful, to him that should '*overcome*'—the heavenly blessedness being presented under the richest variety of the most attractive, and often the most original, images.

ε. Finally, the whole is summed up with an exhortation which shall give an universal character to these particular addresses, a summons to every one with a spiritual ear that he should give earnest heed to the things which were indeed spoken to all. In the addresses to the four last Churches the positions of δ and ε are reversed.

On comparing these Epistles one with another, we may observe that in two Churches, namely in Smyrna and Philadelphia, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls finds matter only for praise; in two, Sardis and Laodicea, with very smallest exception in the former, matter only for rebuke. In three of the Churches, Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira, the spiritual condition is a mixed one, so that with some things to praise, there are also some, more in one, fewer in another, to condemn. It will be perceived at once what far-looking provision is made in the selection of these particular Churches to be addressed, as in the scheme of the addresses to them, for the most varied instructions; for reproof, for praise, for reproof and praise mingled together and tempering one another; for promises and threatenings. The spiritual condition of the several Churches gives room and opportunity, nay, constitutes a necessity, for each and all of these.

I take this opportunity of mentioning that one who probably knew by experience how easily we lose sight of the fact that it is Christ Himself who speaks in these

Epistles—Thomas Allen is his name—has written a book not further known to me, but with the following title: *The Christian's Sure Guide to Eternal Glory, or Living Oracles of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven in his Royal Embassy to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 8vo., London, 1733. Certainly the title promises well, and seems to invite a closer acquaintance with the body of the book.

I.

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF EPHEBUS.

REV. ii. 1-7.

Ver. 1. ‘*Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus write.*’—Ephesus, the chief city of Ionia, *πρώτη τῆς Ἀσίας*, as the Ephesians themselves styled it, asserting in this style that primacy for Ephesus which Smyrna and Pergamum disputed with it, had now so far outstripped both its competitors that it was at once the civil and ecclesiastical centre of that ‘Asia’ with which we have to do. Wealthy, prosperous, and magnificent, ‘*Asiæ lumen*,’ as it was called, a meeting-place of oriental religions and Greek culture, and famous on many grounds in heathen antiquity, it was most famous of all for the celebrated temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world, about which in Acts xix. we read so much (cf. Creuzer’s *Symbolik*, vol. ii. p. 515; Wood’s *Discoveries at Ephesus*; *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1877; Lewin’s *St. Paul*, vol. i. p. 320 sqq.; Falkener’s *Ephesus and the Temple of Diana*; Renan’s *St. Paul*, p. 333 sqq.).¹ But Ephesus had better

¹ For more about Ephesus, see Bishop Alexander’s *Introduction to the First Epistle of John* (*Speaker’s Bible*, vol. iv. p. 275).

titles of honour than these. It was a city greatly favoured of God. St Paul laboured there during three years (Acts xx. 31); he ordained Timothy to be bishop there (1 Tim. i. 3; cf. Eusebius, *H. E.* iii. 4); Aquila, Priscilla, Apollos (Acts xviii. 19, 24, 26), Tychicus (Ephes. vi. 21), all contributed to build up the Church in that city. And if we may judge from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, and from his parting address to the elders of that Church (Acts xx. 17-38), nowhere did the word of the Gospel find a kindlier soil, strike root more deeply, or bear fairer fruits of faith and love. St. John too had made it the chief seat of his ministry, his metropolitan throne, during the closing years of his protracted life; from whence he exercised a wide, though not wholly unquestioned, jurisdiction (for see 3 Ep. 9, 10) over the whole of 'Asia.' How early that ministry there began it is impossible to say, the date of his withdrawal from Jerusalem being itself uncertain, and uncertain also whether he at once chose Ephesus for the middle point of his spiritual activity. From a Church to which so much was given, much would be required. How far it had profited as it might by these signal advantages, how far it had maintained itself at those spiritual heights to which it had once attained, will presently be seen.

'*These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.*'—Cf. i. 20, where '*the mystery of the seven stars*' is unfolded. It is only when all the titles furnished by chap. i. 4-20 are exhausted, that Christ seeks them from any other quarter. At the same time there is a significant alteration here. There He is $\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega\nu$, '*He that hath*'—here more emphatically $\acute{\omicron}\ \kappa\rho\alpha\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$, '*He that holdeth, the seven stars*'—this being stronger and more emphatic than that, '*He that holdeth*' (cf. ii. 25;

iii. 14), than '*He that hath.*' Christ *holds* these stars in his grasp,—an announcement full of comfort for them, if only they are true to Him; none shall pluck them out of his hand (John x. 28); none shall harm them in the delivery of their message (Matt. x. 30; Acts xviii. 9, 10); or if the malice of their enemies is so far permitted that they are able to kill the body, they shall only in this way prepare for them an earlier and a speedier passage to glory (Acts vii. 56, 60; Rev. xi. 7, 12); but an announcement full of fear for the unfaithful, for the idol shepherds (Zech. xi. 17), who feed themselves and not the flock (Ezek. xxxiv. 1-10). Them too He holds in his grasp, and none can deliver them from his hand.

'*Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*'—'*Who walketh*' is new. The Seer had indeed already beheld the Lord '*in the midst of the seven candlesticks*' (i. 13), but not '*walking*' in their midst. The word expresses the unwearied activity of Christ in his Church, moving up and down in the midst of it; beholding the evil and the good; evermore trimming and feeding with oil of grace the golden lamps of the sanctuary. Marckius: '*Ad innuendam clarius perpetuitatem actûs et curam Christi contra conatus oppositos Satanæ.*' It is impossible not to admire the appropriateness of these titles, expressing as they do the broader and more general relations of Christ to his Church, for the first Epistle in this series; which constitutes, as this and a thousand other tokens declare, not an accidental aggregate, but a divinely-ordered complex, with all its parts mutually upholding and completing one another.

Ver. 2. '*I know thy works.*'—In considering these and all the following words of Christ, we must never leave out of sight what an old interpreter has so well expressed,

‘unam facit Angeli Ecclesiæque personam.’ Any attempt to distinguish between them is futile, and contrary to the intention of the Lord. This formula, ‘*I know thy works,*’ is common to all the Epistles, serving as the introduction to all;—which being so, ‘*works*’ are not, as some interpreters understand them, *good* works; for Christ uses this language where there were no works which He could count good (iii. 15); as little are they *bad* works (iii. 8); but the word is used with the same freedom here as in other parts of Scripture, now for good (John vii. 21; 1 Cor. iii. 14), and now for evil (Isai. lxvi. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 15; Tit. i. 16). ‘*I know thy works,*’ therefore has another intention than to express either praise or blame. It declares the omniscience of Him who walks up and down among the candlesticks of gold, whom nothing escapes (Amos iv. 13; Ps. xi. 4, 5; John ii. 24, 25; Heb. iv. 13; Rev. ii. 23; Acts i. 24; xv. 8); an assurance of comfort and strength for all them who, amid infinite weaknesses and failures, are yet able to say, ‘Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me’ (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24), or with St. Peter, ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love thee’ (John xxi. 17); but words full of terror and alarm for every one who would fain keep back anything in his outer or inner life from the Lord. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. iv. 13); and this in these words He declares.

‘*And thy labour, and thy patience.*’—There was an earlier Angel of this same Church of Ephesus, on whom as on his son St. Paul had urged that he should not fail in this ‘*labour and patience*’ (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25); and Christ’s commendation here shows that the holy lesson

had been laid to heart by him who had now stepped into his place. The *κόπος*, occasioned probably by the earnest resistance which it was necessary to oppose to the false teachers in the Ephesian Church, would naturally fall chiefly on the bishop and presbyters—above all, on the first.—*Κόπος* and *κοπιάω* are frequently used in reference both to apostolic and ministerial labours (Rom. xvi. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 10; Gal. iv. 11); *κόπος* often in connexion with *μόχθος* (1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8; 2 Cor. xi. 27); the latter perhaps marking the toil on the side of the magnitude of the obstacles which it has to surmount, as the derivation *μόγυς*, and the possible connexion with *μέγας*, seems to suggest (Ellicott); the former alluding to the toil and suffering which in these labours strenuously and faithfully performed is involved. Thus see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 102. For indeed this word *κόπος*, signifying as it does not merely labour, but labour *unto weariness*, may suggest some solemn reflections to every one who at all affects to be working for his Lord, and as under his great Taskmaster's eye, and as looking for his 'Well done.' This is what Christ expects, this is what Christ praises, in his servants. But how often does labour, which esteems itself labour for Him, stop very short of this, take care for itself that it shall never arrive at this point; and perhaps in our days none are more tempted continually to measure out to themselves tasks too light and inadequate, than those to whom an office and ministry in the Church has been committed. Indeed, there is here to them an ever-recurring temptation, derived from the fact that they do for the most part measure out their own day's task to themselves. Others in almost every other calling or profession have this measured out to them; if not the zeal, earnestness,

sincerity which they are to put into the performance of it, yet at any rate its form and frame, the amount of time which they shall devote to it, and often the definite amount of work which they shall accomplish. It is not so with us. We give to it exactly the number of hours which we please; we are for the most part responsible to no man; and when toilers thus apportion their own burdens, and do this day after day, how near the danger lies that they should unduly spare themselves, and make their burdens far lighter than they should have been. We may well keep this word *κόπος*, and all that it signifies, namely labour unto weariness, in mind; and remember ever that it is this which the Lord praises and allows.—For *ὑπομονή* see p. 22.

‘*And how thou canst not bear them which are evil.*’—Christ has good things to say of the Church of Ephesus, and He who, as highest Love, *συγχαίρει τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*, has pleasure in and *with* the truth (1 Cor. xiii. 6), dwells on these good things first; He graciously puts in the foremost place all which He can find to approve; and only after this has received its meed of praise, notes the shortcomings which He is also compelled to rebuke. Many graces had decayed at Ephesus; of this we may be sure; seeing that the grace of all graces, namely, love, had decayed (ver. 4); but in the midst of this decay there survived an earnest hatred of certain evil-doers and evil deeds. The *κακοί* here are not exactly equivalent to the *κακοὶ ἐργάται* of Phil. iii. 2. These last are the *prominent* workers of mischief in the Church, false apostles, false prophets, and the like; but the *κακοί* will include the whole rabble of evil-doers as well. It is not a little remarkable that the grace or virtue here ascribed to the Angel of the Ephesian Church, and still more strongly

at ver. 6, should have a name in later heathen Greek, *μισοπονηρία* (Plutarch, *Quom. Am. ab Adul.* 12), the person of whom the grace is predicated being *μισοπόνηρος*, while neither of these words, nor yet any equivalent to them, occurs in the N. T. This is the stranger, as this hatred of evil purely as evil, however little thought of, or admired now, is eminently a *Christian* grace (Rom. xii. 9 : cf. Gen. xxxvii. 2 ; xlix. 6 ; Ps. cxxxix. 21 ; 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8). The sphere in which the Angel of Ephesus had the chief opportunity of manifesting a holy intolerance of evil-doers was, no doubt, that of Church-discipline, separating off from fellowship with the faithful those who named the name of Christ, yet would not depart from iniquity (2 Tim. ii. 19). The infirmities, even the sins, of *weak* brethren, are burdens which *may* be borne, nay, which those that are spiritual are commanded to bear (cf. Gal. vi. 2, where the same word *βαστάζειν* is used) ; but these offenders here are not *weak* brethren, but *false* ; and there must be no such toleration of them (Ps. ci. 7, 8 ; cxix. 115 ; 1 Cor. v. 11).

‘ *And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars.*’—We translate by the same word the *πειράζειν* here and the *δοκιμάζειν* of 1 John iv. 1. What this Angel at Ephesus had done, and effectually done, St. John there bids the faithful to do—namely, to prove the spirits of those who came to them claiming to teach as with authority, and to bring a direct message from God (cf. 1 Thess. v. 21 ; 1 Tim. iv. 1). The touchstone which he there gives, the Ithuriel’s spear which should compel each false teacher to start up and show himself in his proper shape, is the acknowledgment or denial of the true humanity of the Son of God, that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh (ver. 2, 3 ; 2 John 7 ;

and Ignatius, *passim*). At the same time we must not regard this as so absolutely *the* touchstone, that other times and other conditions of the Church might not demand other tests. Thus, in the fourth century and during the Arian conflict, the *Homoousion*, ‘of one substance with the Father,’ was that by which the spirits were to be tried; a little later, during the Nestorian controversy, it was the *θεοτόκος*. And when our Lord, warning against false prophets, lays down this rule, ‘Ye shall know them by their fruits’ (Matt. vii. 16), He adds another test by which all such, sooner or later, may be known. By what methods the Angel of this Church had tried these pretenders to the apostolate, and discovered the falsehood of their claims, we are not told; but probably by a union of both these tests. If these false prophets were, as is generally assumed, the chiefs and leaders of the Nicolaitan wickedness, which is presently named by its name (ver. 6), then *doctrinally* he will have tried them by the touchstone of Christ’s true humanity, whether they would confess this or deny it;—we may be sure that they had that in common with all other Gnostics, which led them to the denial of it;—and *practically*, by the fruits which they bore; which, being works of shame and darkness, avouched that the workers of them were not, and could not be, sent of Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all. And even were they not precisely identical with the Nicolaitans, on which there will be something to say at ver. 6, these tests would not the less effectually have revealed of what spirit they were, and to what kingdom they belonged.

We must not press ‘*apostles*’ here, as though it implied a claim on their parts to have seen and been immediately sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, which was

necessary for an Apostle in the highest sense of the word (Acts i. 21, 22 ; 1 Cor. ix. 1), nor even by the mother Church at Jerusalem. It was now too late for either. St. John alone of living men could claim the first prerogative, and Jerusalem had long ago been destroyed. As little are these ‘*which say they are apostles*’ identical in the actual form of their resistance to the truth with those ‘*false apostles, deceitful workers,*’ who everywhere sought to hinder the labours of St. Paul, and everywhere denied the apostolic authority and commission which he claimed (2 Cor. x. 11). Those and these had indeed this in common, that they alike opposed the truth ; but those were Judaizers, seeking to bring back the ceremonial law and the obligations of it (see Acts xv. 1 ; Phil. iii. 2 ; 1 Tim. i. 7 ; Gal. ii. 12 ; iii. 2 ; v. 2, 6, and indeed *passim*) ; these, on the other hand, do not judaize, but heathenize, seeking to throw off every yoke, to rid themselves not of the ceremonial law only, but also of the moral ; and to break down every distinction separating the Church from a world lying in the Wicked one.¹

Ver. 3. ‘*And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*’—

¹ This intolerance of error, this resolution to hold fast the precious deposit of the truth, to suffer nothing to be added to it, nothing to be taken from it, nothing to be altered in it, was still the mark and glory of the Ephesian Church at a date somewhat later than this. It is a remarkable testimony to this which Ignatius, writing not many years after, bears, and it admirably agrees with the testimony which the Lord Himself bears here to its zeal for doctrinal purity (*ad Ephes. vi.*) : αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν Ὀνήσιμος ὑπερπαίνει ὑμῶν τὴν ἐν Θεῷ εὐταξίαν, ὅτι ἐν ὑμῖν οὐδεμία αἵρεσις κατοικεῖ· ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ἀκούετέ τινος πλέον ἢ περ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λαλοῦντος ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. And again, c. ix. : ἔγνων δὲ παραδεύσαντάς τινας ἐκείθεν, ἔχοντας κακὴν διδαχὴν· οὓς οὐκ εἰάσατε σπεῖριμι εἰς ὑμᾶς, βύσαντες τὰ ὄντα, εἰς τὸ μὴ παραδέξασθαι τὰ σπειόμενα ὑπ’ αὐτῶν.

There is a good deal of filling up by transcribers here, and more than one phrase to be omitted. The following version will represent more truly the original as it stands in the best critical editions: ‘*And hast patience, and didst bear for my name’s sake, and hast not grown weary.*’ It is not hard to see the inducements which led transcribers to meddle with the text, and in the last clause of the verse to change *καὶ οὐ κεκοπίακας* into *κεκοπίακας καὶ οὐ κέκμηκας*. They took the verb *κοπιῶ* only in the sense of ‘to labour;’ but how could it be said in praise of the Ephesian Angel that he had *not* laboured; above all when his *κόπος* had just before (ver. 2) been the especial object of the Lord’s commendation, as indeed it is throughout the Epistle? so they changed the word to what we have in the received text and in our Version; ‘*thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*’ But *κοπιῶ* is not only to labour, but implying, as we have seen it does, strenuous and exhausting labour, will often mean farther, to grow weary with labour (thus John iv. 6; Matt. xi. 28: *κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι*); and it is this for which the Lord here praises the Angel and in him the Church at Ephesus, that he was *φερέπονος* (Marc. Antoninus, v. 5), that he and the others had borne the burden and heat of a long day’s toil without fainting under it, or waxing weary of it (Gal. vi. 9). This recurrence to the *κόπος* of the verse preceding is very instructive, though it is hard, if not impossible, to reproduce it in English. ‘Thou knowest,’ He would say, ‘what *κόπος* is, without knowing what *κοπιᾶν* is;’ and that this is not accidental seems evident from the exactly similar recurrence of *βαστάζειν* in both verses: ‘There are things which thou *canst not* bear, and things which thou *canst* bear; thou *canst not* bear the wicked, such false brethren as name the name of Christ

only to bring shame and disgrace upon it; thou hast something of the spirit of him who declared, "He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Ps. ci. 10; cf. 2 John 10); but thou *canst* bear my reproach, my cross;' cf. Luke xiv. 27, where the same word *βαστάζειν* is used as here; so also John xix. 17. Wetstein: 'Eleganter opponuntur: οὐ δύνη βαστάσαι et ἐβάστασας. Ferre potes molestias propter Christum et vexationes; at non potes ferre pseudapostolos.'

Ver. 4. '*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*'—Ἐχω κατὰ σοῦ: cf. for the same phrase Matt. v. 23; Mark xi. 25; and for a similar, Col. iii. 13. This is one of three occasions (see ver. 14, 20) on which Christ has to make a like exception, and to dash and qualify his praise with blame. In neither, however, of the other cases is the blame so severe as here, the '*somewhat,*' which appears in part to mitigate the severity of this judgment, having nothing corresponding with it in the original. It is indeed not a '*somewhat,*' which the Lord has against the Ephesian Church; it threatens to grow to be an '*everything;*' for see the verse following, and compare 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3. The great passage on '*first love*' is Jer. ii. 2: 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown,'—words which set forth the first warmth of gratitude, the first devotion of heart on the part of Israel to its Redeemer and Lord (Exod. xiv. 31; xv. 1), when it seemed as if the high flood-tides of a thankful love would never ebb, but would bear it triumphantly over every obstacle, that the heart of the people was knit for ever, by bands which could never be broken, to Him that had brought them out of the iron furnace of

Egypt. Such a '*first love*' of the Bride to the heavenly Bridegroom, and in Him to all that were his, dwelt largely in the Ephesian Church when St. Paul wrote his Epistle to it; he gives God thanks for their love unto all the saints (i. 15); he introduces them without a misgiving into the deepest mysteries of human love and divine (v. 23-33). The suggestion that this leaving of the first love can refer to the abating of any other love but that to God and Christ, grows out of an entire ignorance of the whole spiritual life, the ways by which it travels, and the dangers to which it is inevitably exposed, and which, alas! only too often prove fatal to it. See Maurice, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, pp. 62, 63.

On the question, *When* the Apocalypse was given, we have a certain amount of implicit evidence here, in this reproach with which the Lord reproaches the Ephesian Angel; such as has its value in confirming the ecclesiastical tradition which places it in the reign of Domitian, as against the more modern view which gives the reign of Nero as the date of the composition of this Book. It has been well observed that in St. Paul's Epistle to the Church of Ephesus, there are no signs, nor even presentiments, of this approaching spiritual declension with which the great Searcher of hearts upbraids it here. Writing to no Church does he treat of higher spiritual mysteries. There is no word in the Epistle of blame, no word indicating dissatisfaction with the spiritual condition of his Ephesian converts. He warns them, indeed, in his parting charge given at Miletus, against dangers threatening them at once from within and from without (Acts xx. 29, 30); but no word indicates that they by any fault of theirs were laying themselves open to these. As many as place the Apocalypse in the reign of Nero hardly allow ten years between that

condition and this—too brief a period for so vast and lamentable a change. It is inconceivable that there should have been such a letting go of first love in so brief a time. No: what is here described marks, as Hengstenberg has excellently urged, the rise of another generation,—a condition analogous to that of the children of Israel, when Joshua and the elders who had seen the great wonders of Egypt and of the desert were gathered to their fathers (Josh. xxiv. 31; Judg. ii. 7, 10, 11). With their disappearance from the scene another order of things commences. A second generation rises up with the traditions rather of earnest religion than with its living power. The forms, which were once instinct with life, still survive; but the life itself has, not indeed altogether, yet in good part, departed from them. Place the Apocalypse under Domitian, and thirty years will have elapsed since St. Paul wrote his Epistle to Ephesus—exactly the interval which we require, exactly the life of a generation. The outlines of the truth are still preserved; but the truth itself is not for a second generation what it was for the first. The later has the same watchwords as had the earlier, but they do not rouse as they did once. The virtue which they once had has gone from them. In appearance there is nothing changed; while in fact everything is changed. How often has something of this kind repeated itself in the Church.¹ Thus,

¹ A passage in Bishop Burnet's *History of his own Times* has always seemed to me to throw light on this picture of the Ephesian Church, active, laborious, resolute to maintain in forms of sound words the truth once delivered, and yet with its inner principle of love so far decayed. He is describing the state of the Protestant communities of Switzerland, Germany, and Holland, and of the French Protestant refugees who had found shelter among them from the dragonnades, the 'mission bottée,' as it is so facetiously called by some Roman Catholic writers, of Louis XIV. His words, written in the year 1680,

not to look nearer home, how remarkably was all this fulfilled in the great Pietist revival in Germany, which Franck and Spener so gloriously commenced; and those who succeeded them so feebly carried forward; offering as they did the faintest and feeblest resistance to the rationalism and infidelity which a little later invaded the Church. Gerhard Groot was wont to say of the *Fratres Communis Vitæ*, an Order which he founded, and which wrought much and well in the matter of preparing the way for the Reformation, 'The first generation will be holy, the second learned, the third worldly.'

Ver. 5. '*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.*'—There are ever goads in the recollection of a better and a nobler past, goading him who has taken up with meaner things and lower, and urging him to reclaim and recover what he has lost; as, to take an extreme instance, it is the prodigal's recollection of the 'bread enough and to spare' in his father's house, which makes the swine's husks and the famine even among them so intolerable to him (Luke xv. 17; cf. Heb.

are as follows: 'I was indeed amazed at the labours and learning of the ministers among the Reformed. They understood the Scriptures well in the original tongues, they had all the points of controversy very ready, and did thoroughly understand the whole body of divinity. In many places they preached every day, and were almost constantly employed in visiting their flock. But they performed their devotions but slightly, and read their prayers, which were too long, with great precipitation and little zeal. Their sermons were too long and too dry. And they were so strict, even to jealousy, in the smallest points in which they put orthodoxy, that one who could not go into all their notions, but was resolved not to quarrel with them, could not converse much with them with any freedom.' Speaking of the French refugees from the dragonnades, he says: 'Even among them there did not appear a spirit of piety and devotion suitable to their condition, though persons who have willingly suffered the loss of all things rather than sin against their consciences, must be believed to have a deeper principle in them than can well be observed by others.'

x. 32). And therefore is it that this Ephesian Angel is bidden to remember the glorious heights of grace, the heavenly places, whereupon, though yet on earth, he once walked with Christ during the fervency of his first love. Perhaps the desire shall thus be kindled in him to scale these heights again. In this '*from whence thou art fallen*' an allusion may possibly lie to Isai. xiv. 12, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning.'—'*And repent, and do the first works.*' Christ does not say, 'Feel thy first feelings;' that perhaps would have been impossible, and even if possible, might have had but little value in it; but '*Do the first works,*' such as thou didst in the time of thy first devotedness and zeal. Not so much the *quantity*, as the *quality*, of his works was now other and worse than once it had been.

'*Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*'—The '*quickly*' is wanting in most MSS., and has probably found its way here from ver. 16; iii. 11; xxii. 7, 12, 20. The removing of the candlestick from a place implies the entire withdrawal of Christ's grace, of his Church with all its blessings, from that spot, with the transfer of it to another; for it is *removal* of the candlestick, not *extinction* of the candle, which is threatened here—judgment for some, but that very judgment the occasion of mercy for others. And so it has proved. The Churches of Asia Minor are now no more, or barely and hardly exist; but the grace of God, withdrawn from them, has been bestowed elsewhere. The seat of the Church has been changed, but the Church itself still survives. The candlestick has been removed, but the candle has not been quenched; and what the East has lost the West has gained. How awful for Ephesus the fulfilment of the

threat has been every modern traveller who has visited the ruins of that once famous city has borne witness. One who did so not long ago found only three Christians there, and these sunken in such ignorance and apathy as scarcely to have heard the names of St. Paul or St. John. This same transfer of the Church's privileges from some to others more worthy of them is expressed elsewhere under other images (Matt. xxi. 41; Rom. xi. 17); while sometimes the image expresses only the judgment, and not the mercy as well which is behind the judgment (Isai. v. 5, 7; Luke xiii. 6-10).

Ver. 6. *'But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.'*—Very beautiful is the tenderness of the Lord in thus bringing forward a second time some good thing which He had found at Ephesus. Having been compelled to speak sharp severe words, He yet will not leave off with these; but having wounded, He will, so far as it is safe to do so, also heal.¹ It is no slight praise to love that which Christ loves, and to hate that which Christ hates; and this praise the Lord will not withhold from the Angel of Ephesus.

But the Nicolaitans, whose deeds were the object of the earnest hate of Christ's servants, as also of his own,

¹ On this mingling of praise, so far as truth will allow, with the necessary blame, and the leaving off not with blame, but with praise, Plutarch has much to say in his delightful treatise, *'How to discern a Flatterer from a Friend,'* which is full of instruction on the true spirit of Christian rebuke. On this, which the Lord so notably practises here, namely the not leaving off with rebuke, but if possible with praise, he beautifully says (c. xxxvii.): *'Ἐπεὶ τοίνυν, ὡσπερ εἴρηται, πολλάκις ἢ παρρησία τῷ θεραπευομένῳ λυπηρὰ ὑπάρχει, δεῖ μιμείσθαι τοὺς ἰατρούς. οὔτε γὰρ ἐκείνοι τέμνοντες, ἐν τῷ πονεῖν καὶ ἀλγεῖν καταλείπουσι τὸ πεπονθὸς, ἀλλ' ἐνέβρεξαν προσηνῶς καὶ καθήνησαν· οὔτε οἱ νοουθετοῦντες, ἀστεῖως, τὸ πικρὸν καὶ δηκτικὸν προσβαλόντες ἀποτρέχουσιν, ἀλλ' ὁμιλίαις ἐτέραις καὶ λόγοις ἐπιεικῶς ἐκπραῦνουσι καὶ διαχέουσιν.* Cf. c. xxxiii.

who were they? It is not an easy question to answer. Was there, in the first place, any sect existing at the time when these words were uttered, which actually bore this name? I believe not. The other names of this Book, Egypt, Babylon, Sodom, Jezebel, in agreement with its apocalyptic character, are predominantly mystical and symbolic; and in all probability this is so as well; while the key to the right understanding of it is given us at ii. 14, 15; where those ‘*that hold the doctrine of Balaam*’ (ver. 14) are evidently identical with those ‘*that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*’ (ver. 15). We are here set upon the right track. It is probable that we hardly rate highly as we ought the significance of Balaam as an Anti-Moses, and therefore as an Antichrist, in the Old Testament. But without entering more into this, it may be observed that his name, according to the best etymology, signifies ‘Destroyer of the people’ (‘*qui absorpsit populum*,’ from בַּלְעָם and מַש); and Νικόλαος (νικᾶν τὸν λαόν) is no more than a grecizing of this name (see Hengstenberg, *Die Gesch. Bileams*, pp. 20–25)—such alternation, or duplication, presenting a word, now in its Greek, now in its Hebrew aspect, being altogether in the character of the Book, Greek in language, but Hebrew in form and spirit, and several times recurring in it; thus, Ἀπολλύων and Ἀβαδδών (ix. 11); Διάβολος and Σατανᾶς (xii. 9; xx. 2); ναί and ἀμήν (i. 7). The genesis of the name, which, so understood, will almost exactly correspond to Armillus (= ἔρημόλαος), the name under which the final Antichrist, according to Jewish fables, shall seduce the followers of Christ to their ruin (see Eisenmenger, *Entd. Judenth.* vol. ii. p. 705, sqq.), may be accounted for in this way. The Nicolaitans, as we have seen, are the Balaamites; no sect bearing the one name or the other; but those who

in the New Dispensation repeated the sin of Balaam, and sought to overcome or lay waste the people of God by the same temptations whereby Balaam had sought to overcome them in the Old. But it was into the fleshly sins of heathenism that he had sought to lead them, to introduce such among the people of God, to draw them to eat idol meats and to commit fornication (Num. xxv. 1-9; xxxi. 16); and this the leading character of his wickedness must be the leading one also of theirs.

The Nicolaitans, then, or Balaamites, are those who, after the pattern of Balaam's sin, sought to introduce a false freedom, the freedom of the flesh, into the Church of God. These were the foremost tempters of the Church in the later apostolic times when the Apocalypse was written, and in the times immediately succeeding. The first great battle which the Church had to fight was with Jewish legalism. This came to its head *historically*, and found its condemnation, in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 1-31), *dogmatically* in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians;—those who refused to accept the Church's décisions on the matter of the relations of the Christian man to the law gradually forming themselves more and more into a body at once schismatical and heretical, known by the name of Ebionites; not any longer within, but henceforth without, the Church's pale. But this danger overcome, St. Paul lived to see before the close of his ministry the rise of another, and that exactly the opposite error—that, namely, of heathen false freedom and libertinism; while in the later writings of the New Covenant, in the Epistle of St. Jude, in the second of St. Peter, and in the Apocalypse of St. John, we find these libertine errors already full blown. These all speak of lawless ones (2 Pet. ii. 19), who abused St. Paul's doctrine of grace (iii. 16), who

promised liberty to others, being themselves servants of corruption (ii. 19), who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4); or, as these Nicolaitans, would fain entice the servants of God to eat idol meats and commit fornication. It is not indeed a little remarkable, as attesting the identity of those whose works the Lord here declares that He hates with them whom his Apostles denounce, that Balaam, whose name, as we have seen, is the keyword to the title which these Nicolaitans bear, and to the works which they do, is set forth alike by St. Peter (ii. 15) and St. Jude (ver. 11) as the seducer in whose path of error these later seducers were themselves running and enticing others to run.

But it may be urged against this explanation of the matter that we find actual Nicolaitans in the second century. Doubtless we do so. That there existed in the second and third centuries a sect of antinomian Gnostics, who bore this name, has been denied by some; but on grounds quite insufficient. Irenæus (i. 26. 3; compare Hippolytus, *Con. Hær.* vii. 36) is probably in error when he makes the founder of this sect to have been Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, whom we find in such honourable company in the Acts (vi. 3, 5); and who, if this were true, must afterwards have miserably fallen away from the faith;¹ while yet the fault of Irenæus is probably no more than that he too lightly admitted the claim which they made to Nicolas as the author of their heresy. It is certainly difficult to see what authority any statement of

¹ At the same time it is certainly significant, as Ewald (*Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, vol. vii. p. 173) has observed, that he should occupy the *last* place in the enumeration of the Deacons (Acts vi. 5); compare the place invariably assigned in lists of the Apostles to Judas Iscariot (Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 19).

Irenæus would retain with us, if we felt at liberty to set aside his distinct assertion of such a sect as existing in his own time. But still more explicit are the references made to Nicolaitans by Tertullian (*De Præsc. Hær.* 46). It cannot be urged of him, as it sometimes is of Irenæus, that he knows nothing about them except what he has drawn from these passages of Scripture; for he gives an account of their doctrines, not merely libertine, but Gnostic, at considerable length. Clement of Alexandria also (*Strom.* ii. 20) speaks without hesitation of claimants to be followers of Nicolas (*οἱ φάσκοντες ἑαυτοὺς Νικολάῳ ἔπρασθαι*) who existed as a body in his day; and elsewhere (*ib.* iii. 4) records their unbridled and excessive lusts. He, indeed, entirely acquits Nicolas the deacon of any share in the authorship of this heresy, giving no credit to this boasted genealogy of theirs. The *Apostolic Constitutions* (vi. 8) do the same. With such distinct notices of Nicolaitans as existing in the second century, it seems a piece of unwarrantable and excessive scepticism to deny the historic existence of such a sect (see Neander, *Kirch. Gesch.* i. 2, p. 774). At the same time, there is no need to suppose that they were the spiritual descendants of actual Nicolaitans, of libertines I mean, bearing this name in the times of St. John. Rather, springing up at a later day, one of the innumerable branches of the Gnostic heresy, they assumed a designation which they found ready made for them in the Apocalypse.¹

It may seem indeed, at the first showing, almost inconceivable that a sect, professing to stand even in the remotest relation to Christianity, should appropriate to

¹ The fullest collection of all passages of antiquity bearing on the Nicolaitans which I know, is in Stern's *Commentar über die Offenbarung*, 1854, pp. 141-145.

itself a name so branded with infamy as in Holy Scripture is this. But we must remember that with many of the Gnostics this was a relation of absolute and entire opposition to nearly all of the Scripture ; and the history of these daring fighters against God would supply many parallel instances of blasphemous impiety. Thus, not to speak of the Ophites, there were the Cainites (Tertullian identifies them and the Nicolaitans, *De Præsc. Hær.* 33), all whose saints and heroes were selected from among those whom the Scripture had stamped with deepest reprobation, the list beginning with Cain and ending with Judas Iscariot (*ib.* 47). When too we keep in mind the intense antagonism of the antinomian Gnostics to St. John as a judaizing Apostle, contradistinguishing these from St. Paul, who with their own Marcion was to sit, Paul on the right hand, and Marcion on the left hand, of Christ in his kingdom, being those for whom this was reserved of the Father (Matt. xx. 23 ; Origen, *in Luc. Hom.* 25 ; cf. Irenæus, iii. 13) ; assuredly there is nothing strange that a name which St. John, or the Saviour by his lips, branded with worst dishonour, they, glorying in their shame, should assume as one of chiefest honour ;—just as in an infidel publication of the present day which has sometimes come under my eye, there are letters signed in blasphemous earnest with the signature of ‘ Antichrist.’

One point still remains. Is the hating of the deeds of the Nicolaitans of this verse identical with the not being able to ‘ *bear them which are evil* ’ of ver. 2 ? or, being a grace growing out of the same holy impatience of evil, is there for all this a certain difference between them, so that while that was rather a hatred of error *in doctrine*, of departure from the faith once delivered, an unmasking of them that said they were apostles and were not, this is

more a hatred of evil *done*, of *the deeds* of the Nicolaitans? In other words, is the Lord here recurring to that good thing which He has already found and praised in Ephesus? or is this new praise, and the recognition of a further grace? Most expositors take for granted that Christ here reverts to and repeats his commendation already uttered, that the Nicolaitans therefore of this are identical with '*them that are evil*' of the former verse. I cannot think it; but must see here not the repetition of praise bestowed before, which would be somewhat flat, but a further merit which Christ is well pleased to find and to acknowledge in his Church at Ephesus. The '*deeds of the Nicolaitans*' were, no doubt, the crowning wickedness there, the bitter fruit growing out of that evil root of false doctrine; but whether in root, as He testified before, or in fruit, as He testifies now, this evil was equally hated by the Angel and Church of Ephesus.

Ver. 7. '*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*'—These words recur in all the Epistles; with only this difference, that in the earlier three they occur *before*, in the later four *after*, the final promise. Is there any meaning in this change of place? It is difficult to believe that there is none. The Apocalypse is a work of such consummate art, a device of such profound wisdom, so penetrated through and through with what we might call a divine cabala, and fashioned according to its laws, that one is slow to assume anything accidental in it, or that any departure in it from a rule which has been once admitted is without a purpose. Still I must own that I have never seen any satisfactory explanation of this transposition. That in every case the words usher in, or commend, truths of the deepest concernment to all, there can be no doubt. This we might confidently argue

from the very form of the exhortation; but we further gather it from a comparison of the passages, all of them of deepest significance, where the same summons to attention recurs (Matt. xi. 15; xiii. 9, 43; Mark vii. 16; Rev. xiii. 9); so that Irving (*Expos. of the Revelation*, vol. i. p. 354) has perfect right when he affirms, 'This form always is used of radical, and as it were generative, truths, great principles, most precious promises, most deep fetches from the secrets of God, being as it were eyes of truth, seeds and kernels of knowledge.' It is always a matter of weightiest concernment to the whole Church of God, which these words usher in or seal.

But let us look a little closer at them, and see what other lessons this summons, in the form which it here takes, is capable of yielding. And first the 'ear' here is not a *natural* ear, neither is this a summons to every man, for every man has such a natural ear, to attend to the words now spoken; but rather the words are an equivalent to the *ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωρεῖτω* of Matt. xix. 12, and imply that spiritual truth needing a spiritual organ for its reception, only he will be able to hear to whom God has given the hearing ear (Deut. xxix. 4), whose ear He has wakened (Isai. l. 4, 5); of others it is true, 'their ear is uncircumcised, and they *cannot* hearken' (Jer. vi. 10). And yet for all this the words are in another sense addressed to every one, inasmuch as he who has not this hearing ear, who discovers from the failure of these words of Christ to reach the depths of his spirit, that he has it not, is implicitly bidden to seek it of Him who can alone give it to any, and who would be well pleased to give it to all. But secondly we are taught by these words how absolute is the identity between the workings of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; how truly the Spirit is the Spirit of

speaking throughout; but now without a word of explanation, what *He* speaks is declared to be what the Spirit speaks. It is the Spirit who declares these things to the Churches. And in that phrase, '*the Churches*,' we are further reminded of the universal character which this Epistle and those that follow it possess. It might seem that all which had hitherto been uttered had been uttered only to one Church, to that of Ephesus; nor would I in the least deny this primary destination, nor that all the reproofs, encouragements, warnings, promises which it contains were designed for Ephesus. But they are not limited to it. He who utters these words will allow of no such limitation. In a form somewhat more solemn he virtually repeats what He once spoke in the days of his flesh, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all;' for, standing as He does at the central heart of things, in his particular there ever lies involved an universal; and therefore is it that heaven and earth may pass away, but his words can never pass away. This universal character of these addresses, that, addressed to one they were at the same time spoken to all, was recognised long ago. Thus in the famous Muratori fragment we find it: '*Johannes in Apocalypsi licet septem Ecclesiis scribat, tamen omnibus dicit.*'

'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'—It is deeply interesting and instructive to observe how in this, and probably in every other case, the character of the promise corresponds to the character of the faithfulness displayed. They who have abstained from the idol-meats, from the sinful dainties of the flesh and world, shall, in return, '*eat of the tree of life*;' or, as it is in the Epistle to Pergamum, '*of the hidden manna*' (ii. 17); the same law of correspondency and compensation reigning in most,

if not all the other promises as well. They who have not feared those who can kill the body only, who have given, where need was, their bodies to the flame, shall not be hurt by the second death (ii. 11). They whom the world has not vanquished, shall have dominion over the world (ii. 26, 27). They who keep their garments here undefiled, shall be clad in the white and shining garments of immortality there (iii. 4, 5). They who overcome Jewish pretensions (and the earnest warnings of the Epistle to the Hebrews show us that this for some was not done without the hardest struggle), shall be made free, not of an earthly, but of an heavenly, Jerusalem (iii. 12). The only Church in which any difficulty occurs in tracing the correlation between the form of the victory and the form of the reward, is the last.

But this much said by way of general introduction to all the promises, the promise here may well claim closer attention. The image of the Christian as a conqueror, one *'that overcometh,'* is frequent with St. Paul (2 Tim. ii. 5; 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25); even as on the other hand he contemplates sin as an *ἡττημα*, a being worsted or overcome (1 Cor. vi. 7); but such phrases as *νικᾶν τὸν κόσμον*, *νικᾶν τὸν πονηρόν*, or simply *νικᾶν* as here, nowhere occur in his Epistles—the only passage in them which in the least resembles these, or where the word is employed to express the moral victory over sin and temptation, is Rom. xii. 21. This use of *νικᾶν*, with that single and partial exception, is exclusively St. John's; and the frequent recurrence of it on the one side in his Gospel and Epistles, and on the other in the Apocalypse (thus compare John xvi. 33; 1 Ep. ii. 13, 14; v. 4, 5, with Rev. ii. 11, 17, 26; iii. 5, 12, 21; xii. 11; xxi. 7), constitutes an interesting point of contact between the language of this Book and of those others

whereof he is the author as well ; and, for those who need such evidence, an evidence for the identity of the author of those and of this. It occurs in the ethical terminology of heathen philosophy at its best. Thus Plato (*Legg.* i. 626 E) : τὸ νικᾶν αὐτὸν πασῶν νικῶν πρώτη τε καὶ ἀρίστη.

It is very noteworthy,—and this ‘*I will give,*’ recurring as it does so constantly in all these Epistles, bids us to note,—how absolutely without reserve or qualification Christ assumes for Himself throughout them all the distribution of rewards, as supreme and sole *μισθαποδότης* (Heb. xi. 6) in the kingdom of glory (ii. 10, 17, 26, 28 ; ii. 21 : cf. xxi. 6 ; 2 Tim. iv. 8 ; Matt. xx. 8). Elsewhere St. Paul has said, ‘The gift of God is eternal life’ (Rom. vi. 23) ; here it appears eminently as the gift of Christ. And his ‘*I will give,*’ though still in the future, is sure. It has nothing in it of the *δώσω* of that ever promising but never performing king of Macedon ; who, having ever this same *δώσω* on his lips, but never the *δώρον* in his hands, acquired the name of *Doson*, fastened as no honourable distinction upon him who, being rich in promises, yet never crowned the promise with the performance.

The use of *ξύλον*, the *dead* timber in classical Greek, for *δένδρον*, the *living* tree, is Hellenistic ; not indeed exclusively confined to the Septuagint and the N.T., being found in the Alexandrian poets, Callimachus for instance, as well ; indeed, there is an anticipation of it in Herodotus, iii. 47. In ‘*the tree of life*’ there is manifest allusion to Gen. ii. 9. The tree which disappeared with the disappearance of the earthly Paradise, reappears with the reappearance of the heavenly, Christ’s kingdom being in the highest sense ‘the restitution of all things’ (Acts iii. 21). Whatever had been lost through Adam’s sin is won back, and that too in a higher shape, through Christ’s

obedience. That the memory of ‘*the tree of life*’ had not in the mean time perished, we gather from such references to it as Prov. iii. 18 ; xi. 30 ; xiii. 12 ; xv. 4.¹ ‘*To eat of the tree of life*’ is a figurative phrase to express participation in the life eternal ; cf. Gen. iii. 22 ; Ezek. xlvi. 12 ;² Rev. xxii. 2, 14 ; 2 Esdr. ii. 12 ; vii. 53 ; and Ecclus. xix. 19 : ‘They that do things that please Him shall receive the fruit of the tree of immortality’ (ἀθανασίας δένδρον καρπούνται). Compare the words of the Christian Sibyl :

Οἱ δὲ Θεὸν τιμῶντες ἀληθινὸν ἀεναόντε
 Ζωὴν κληρονομοῦσι τὸν αἰῶνος χρόνον, αὐτοὶ
 Οἰκοῦντες Παραδείσου ὁμῶς ἐριθήλεα κήπον,
 Δαυόμενοι γλυκὴν ἄρτον ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος.

We meet with echoes and reminiscences of this ‘*tree of life*’ in the mythologies of many nations ; or, if not actual reminiscences of it, yet reachings out after it, as in the Yggdrasil of our own northern mythology (Grimm, *Deutsche Mythol.* p. 756) ; and still more remarkable in the Persian Hom. This Hom is the king of trees, is called in the Zend-Avesta the Death-destroyer ; it grows by the fountain of Arduisur, in other words, by the waters of life ; while its sap drunken imparts immortality (Creuzer, *Symbolik*, vol. i. p. 187, and often).

For the words, ‘*which is in the midst of the Paradise of God,*’ we should read, ‘*which is in the Paradise of*

¹ The Rabbis, of course, know a great deal about this ‘*tree of life*.’ Its boughs overshadow the whole of Paradise. It has five hundred thousand fragrant smells, and its fruit as many pleasant tastes, not one of them resembling any other (Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, vol. ii. p. 311 ; which book also see, pp. 260–320, for much on the Upper and the Under Paradise, as the Jews were wont to call them).

² Lucian’s words (*Ver. Hist.* ii. 14), in his account of the Island of the Blest, sound very much like a scoff at this : αἱ μὲν ἄμπειλοι δω-δεκάφοροὶ εἶσι, καὶ κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον καρποφοροῦσι.

God'—transcribers having brought their '*in the midst*' from Gen. ii. 9. Παράδεισος is a word whose history is well worth tracing. The word and the thing which it designated are both generally said to be Persian; though this is now earnestly denied by some, who claim for it a Semitic origin (see Tuch, *Genesis*, p. 68; Delitzsch, *Genesis*, p. 137, 2nd edit.). It was first naturalized in Greek by Xenophon, who designated by it the parks or pleasure-gardens of Persia, in which wild beasts were kept or stately trees grown (*Hell.* iv. 1. 15; *Æcon.* iv. 13; *Cyrop.* i. 4. 11), being at once the 'vivarium' and the 'viridarium' (Augustine, *Serm.* 343; 'leporarium' Varro calls it) of the Romans; for classical Latin, it may be observed by the way, did not know the word 'paradisus' (see A. Gellius, ii. 20. 4, and the long circumlocution by which Cicero, *De Senect.* 17, is compelled to express the thing). Where the Septuagint Translators employ παράδεισος, it is commonly to designate the garden of Eden (Gen. ii. 8; iii. 1; Ezek. xxviii. 13), though sometimes it stands there for any stately garden of delight whatever (Isai. i. 30; Jer. xxix. 5; Eccl. ii. 5: ἐποίησά μοι κήπους καὶ παραδείσους). Philo refers to it often as such, describing it in language which has an Homeric touch about it: χῶρον οὔτε ὄμβροισι οὔτε νιφετοῖς, οὔτε κύμασι βαρυνόμενον, ἀλλ' ὃν ἐξ Ὀκεανοῦ πρᾶνς αἰὲλ ζέφυρος ἐπιπνείων ἀναψύχει. The word, by the time that it appears in the N.T., has taken a great spring. The ideal beauty of that dwelling-place of our first parents, perhaps also the fact that it had now vanished from the earth, has caused the name 'Paradise' to be transferred to that region and province in Hades, or the invisible world, where the souls of the faithful are gathered, waiting for their perfect consummation and bliss. 'Their [the Jews'] meaning therefore was

this : that as paradise, or the garden of Eden, was a place of great beauty, pleasure, and tranquillity, so the state of separate souls was a state of peace and excellent delights' (so Jeremy Taylor in his beautiful *Sermon at the Funeral of Sir George Dalstone*). It is in this sense, as a place of rest after the storms of life, that Christ allowed and employed the term, when to the penitent malefactor He said, 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise' (Luke xxii. 43).¹ But even this is not all. The word takes a higher meaning yet ; for this inferior Paradise is not to be confounded with the superior or heavenly, 'the Paradise of God,' as it is here called (the *phrase* has already occurred in the Septuagint, Ezek. xxxi. 7, 8), 'the third heaven,' where is the immediate presence and glory of God (2 Cor. xii. 2, 4). We may thus trace *παράδεισος* passing through an ascending scale of meanings. From any garden of delight, which is its first meaning, it comes to be predominantly applied to the garden of Eden ; then to the resting-place of separate souls in joy and felicity ; and lastly, to the very heaven itself ; and we see eminently in it, what we see indeed in so many words, how revealed religion assumes them into its service, and makes them vehicles of far higher truth than any which they knew at first, transforming and transfiguring them, as in this case, from glory to glory.

This '*tree of life*,' with the privilege to the faithful of eating of its fruits, appears again at the close of this Book (xxii. 2, 14). It is very interesting to note, and no fitter opportunity than this for noting, the fine and subtle bands which knit one part of the Apocalypse to

¹ The two chief passages in the Fathers on Paradise contemplated as this middle state, are Tertullian, *De Animá*, 55 (his book *De Paradiso* has not reached us) ; and Origen, *De Princ.* ii. 11. 6.

another, the marvellous art, if we may dare to use an earthly word speaking of a heavenly fact, with which this Book is constructed. Especially these seven Epistles, which at first sight might seem, which to some *have* seemed, to be but slightly attached to the other parts of the Book, do yet on nearer examination prove to be bound to them by the closest possible bands. There is not one of the promises made to the faithful in these second and third chapters, which does not look on to, and perhaps first find its full explanation in, some later portion of the Book. Thus the eating of the tree of life, as unfolded farther at xxii. 2, 14, 19; deliverance from the second death (ii. 11) receives its solemn commentary, xx. 14; xxi. 8; the writing of the new name of ii. 17 reappears xiv. 1; the dominion over the heathen of ii. 26 at xx. 4; the morning star of ii. 28 at xxii. 16; the white garments of iii. 5 at iv. 4; vii. 9, 13; the name found written in the book of life of iii. 5 at xiii. 8; xx. 15; the New Jerusalem and the citizenship in it of iii. 12 at xxi. 10; xxii. 14; the sitting upon the throne of iii. 21 at iv. 4.¹

¹ Very beautifully Bengel on this matter, though his words refer not to the seven Epistles only, but to the whole Book: '*Partes hujus libri passim inter se respiciunt. Omnino structura libri hujus prorsus artem divinam spirat; estque ejus quodam modo proprium, ut res futuras multas, et in multitudine varias, proximas, intermedias, remotissimas, maximas, minimas, terribiles, salutare, ex veteribus prophetis repetitas, novas, longas, breves, easque inter se contextas, oppositas, compositas, seque mutuo involventes et evolventes, ad se invicem ex intervallo parvo aut magno respicientes, adeoque interdum quasi disparentes, abruptas, suspensas, et postea de improvise opportunissime sub conspectum redeuntes, absoluto compendio complectatur; atque his rebus, quæ complectitur liber, structura libri exacte respondet. Itaque in omnibus suis partibus admirabilem habet varietatem, spirasque pulcherrimas, simulque summam harmoniam, per ipsas anomalias, quæ illam interpellare videntur, valde illustratam.*'

II.

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA.

REV. ii. 8-11.

Ver. 8. ‘*And unto the Angel of the Church in Smyrna write.*’—The next in order to Ephesus of the seven Churches is Smyrna; the next not only in the spiritual order here, but in the natural as well, lying as it does a little to the north of that city. Smyrna, ‘the ornament of Asia’ (*ἄγαλμα τῆς Ἀσίας*, as it has been called), was one of the fairest and noblest cities of Ionia (*ἡ καλλίστη τῶν Ἰωνικῶν πόλεων*, Lucian, *Imagg.* 2), most favourably placed upon the coast to command the trade of the Levant, which equally in old and modern times it has enjoyed. In ecclesiastical history it is chiefly famous as the Church over which Polycarp presided as bishop for so many years. This Church must have been founded at a very early date, though there is no mention of it either in the Acts or in the Epistles of St. Paul.

✓ Tertullian indeed distinctly tells us that Polycarp was consecrated bishop of Smyrna by St. John (*De Præsc. Hæret.* 32); and Irenæus, who affirms that he had himself in his youth often talked with him, declares the same (Eusebius, *H. E.* iv. 14: cf. iii. 36; Jerome, *Catal. Script.* s. v. *Polycarpus*; Jacobson, *Patt. Apostoll.* p. 564;

Röthe, *Die Anfänge d. Christl. Kirche*, p. 429). His martyrdom belongs to the principate of Antoninus Pius, and to the year A.D. 154, or 155.¹

‘*These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.*’—Being addressed, as this Epistle is, to a Church exposed, and hereafter to be still more exposed, to the fiercest blasts of persecution, it is graciously ordered that all the attributes which Christ here claims for Himself should be such as would encourage and support his servants in their trials and distress. Brightman: ‘Titulos sibi sumit [Christus] qui præsentis rerum conditioni conveniunt. Unde varium sæ gloriæ radium in singulis Epistolis spargit, pro variâ fortunâ quâ sunt Ecclesiæ.’ For these titles of Christ, ‘*the first and the last,*’ and ‘*which was dead, and is alive,*’ or rather, ‘*who became dead, and lived again,*’ see i. 17, 18. Ἐξήσεν here is not ‘vixit,’ but ‘revixit’ (cf. Ezek. xxxvii. 3; John v. 25; Rev. xiii. 14); death having been for Him only the passage to a more glorious life. How then should his servants fear them who could kill the body, and then had nothing more which they could do? what misgivings should they have in committing their souls to One, who had so triumphantly redeemed and rescued his own?

Ver. 9. ‘*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; but thou art rich.*’—For the first clause see what has been said already on ver. 2; the words of themselves

¹ An important communication recently made by M. Waddington to the French Académie des Inscriptions has put it beyond all doubt that the date of Polycarp’s death usually given,—some time, that is, falling within the years A.D. 166–169,—is too late by more than ten years. The best scholars alike in England and abroad have assented to the conclusions at which on this matter he has arrived. Thus Bishop Lightfoot, see the *Contemporary Review*, May, 1875, p. 838; and Renan, *L’Antechrist*, p. 566.

express neither praise nor blame. The ‘*tribulation*’ refers out of all doubt to the affliction which the Church of Smyrna endured at the hands of its Jewish and heathen persecutors and oppressors, *θλίβειν* and *θλίψις* being constant words to express this (1 Thess. iii. 4; Heb. xi. 37; Acts xx. 23; Rev. i. 9, and often). So too their ‘*poverty*’ will probably have come upon them through the spoiling of their goods (Heb. x. 34), and the various wrongs in their worldly estate which the profession of the faith of Christ will have brought with it—‘*But thou art rich.*’ How much better this, poor in the esteem of the world, but rich before Christ, than the condition of the Laodicean Angel, rich in his own esteem, but most poor in the sight of Christ (iii. 17). There can, of course, be no doubt that ‘*rich*’ here means rich *in grace* (cf. Rom. viii. 32; Col. ii. 3; 1 Tim. vi. 18), having treasure in heaven (Matt. vi. 20; xix. 21; Luke xii. 21), as the same word *πλούσιος* expresses in a similar, but yet a far higher sense, rich *in glory* elsewhere (2 Cor. viii. 9). These words, to which Jam. ii. 5–7 furnishes a remarkable parallel, constitute a very beautiful parenthesis, declaring as they do the judgment of heaven concerning this Church of Smyrna, as contradistinguished from the judgment of earth. Men saw nothing there save the poverty, but He who sees not as man seeth, saw the true riches which this seeming poverty concealed, even as He too often sees the real poverty which may lie behind the show of riches; for there are both poor rich-men and rich poor-men in his sight. Very beautifully, though of course moving in altogether a different and lower sphere of thought, the Greek comic poet writes (Meineke, *Fragm. Com.* p. 765):

ψυχὴν ἔχειν δεῖ πλουσίαν· τὰ δὲ χρήματα
ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ὄψις, παραπέτασμα τοῦ βίου.

‘*And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*’—The most important question which presents itself here is this—in what sense shall we take the term ‘*Jews*’? By ‘*those which say they are Jews, and are not,*’ shall we understand Jews literally so called, who, being the natural seed of Abraham, claimed also to be the spiritual; or, accepting ‘*Jews*’ here as the designation of the true circumcision not made with hands, that is, of Christians, shall we see in these some who claimed to be Christians, but whose right to belong to his Church Christ here denies? The former appears to me the preferable interpretation. The analogy of such passages as Rom. ii. 28, 29; ix. 6; Phil. iii. 2, 3, points this way.¹ Then, again, these opposers and blasphemers were evidently persecutors to bonds and death of the faithful at Smyrna; but, extreme shame and disgrace as some of the heretical sects were bringing on the true Church at this time, there is no tittle of evidence that they had the power or the desire to persecute it with the weapons of outward persecution. It was otherwise, however, with the Jews literally so named. What their ‘*blasphemy*’ against Jesus of Nazareth, against the Lord of glory, but known to them as ‘*the hanged one,*’ was, and still is, we are only too well aware (see Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, vol. i. pp. 61-188). While too the opposition of the heathen was still languid and fitful, the jealousy of the Roman state being hardly awakened, the fierceness of *their* enmity, the eagerness with which *they* sought to stimulate the enmity of the heathen, almost every page in the Acts

¹ There is a long discussion in one of Augustine’s letters (*Ep. xcvi.* § 6-16), how far Christians, as the true circumcision, might rightfully be called Jews.

declares (xiii. 50; xiv. 2, 5, 19; xvii. 5; xxiv. 2; 1 Thess. ii. 14); and many a page of early ecclesiastical history no less. Moreover, this blasphemy and malignant antagonism of the Jews against the truth displayed itself in bitterest enmity against this very Church of Smyrna. We learn from that precious document, the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna recording the martyrdom of Polycarp, that Jews joined with heathens in crying out in the amphitheatre that the Christian bishop should be cast to the lions; and when there was a difficulty about this, that he should be burned alive; which being granted, the Jews, as was their wont (*ὡς ἕθος αὐτοῖς*), were foremost and forwardest in bringing logs for the funeral pile; they, too, doing all that lay in their power to hinder the remains of the martyr from being delivered to his followers for burial (cap. 12, 13, 17).

In the words which follow, ‘*but are the synagogue of Satan,*’ I find another proof that Jews, literally so called, are intended. To them belonged the synagogue, to Christians the Church. Through all the N. T. *συναγωγή* is only once used for a Christian place of assembly (Jam. ii. 2), never for the body of the faithful in Christ Jesus. With this one exception, capable of an easy explanation (see my *Synonyms of the N. T.*, § 1), the word is abandoned to the Jews. And that congregation of theirs, which might have been the Church of the living God, is now ‘*the synagogue of Satan*’—a hard saying, a terrible designation on the lips of Him who uses not such words at random, but a title which they, once the chosen people of the Lord, had wrought with all their might to deserve. Nothing else indeed was possible for them, if they would not be his people indeed; they could not be as the heathen, merely *non-Christian*, they must be *anti-Christian*. The

measure of their former nearness to God was the measure of their present distance from Him. In the height to which they were lifted up was involved the depth to which, if they did not continue at that height, they must inevitably fall; and this, true for them, is true also for all, for as many as, inheriting their privileges, are therefore exposed to their dangers.—As nothing is accidental in this Book, so it is worth remarking that as we have here ‘*the synagogue of Satan*,’ so presently ‘*the throne of Satan*’ (ii. 13), and then lastly, ‘*the depths of Satan*’ (ii. 24); ‘*the synagogue of Satan*’ representing the Jewish antagonism to the Church, ‘*the throne of Satan*’ the heathen, and ‘*the depths of Satan*’ the heretical.

Ver. 10. ‘*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.*’—The great Captain of our salvation never keeps back or conceals what those who faithfully witness for Him may have to bear for his name’s sake; never entices recruits into his service, or seeks to retain them under his banner, by the promise that they shall find all things easy and pleasant there. So far from this, He says of St. Paul at the outset of his apostolic career, ‘I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake’ (Acts ix. 16; cf. Matt. x. 16–31; Luke ix. 23; John xvi. 2, 33; Ezek. ii. 3–7; Jer. i. 19); and in like manner He announces to the Angel of Smyrna that bonds, and tribulation, and death itself, are before him and before others, as many as at Smyrna shall continue faithful to the end. But for all this they are *not* to fear. Presently He will declare to them *why* they should not fear; but first He further unrolls in their sight the scroll of their sufferings.

‘*Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.*’—‘Ο διάβολος (=κατήγορ, Rev. xii. 10; ‘criminator’ as an old Latin version; ‘accusator’

in the Vulgate), a name given to Satan by the Alexandrian translators with reference to the work of *accuser* ascribed to him, accusing men to God (Job. i. 9; ii. 5; Zech. iii. 1, 2; Wisd. ii. 24), and also, which is less often urged, accusing God to men (Gen. iii. 1, 5): ‘Sed et diaboli nomen meretur, ὡς τὸν Θεὸν πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους συκοφαντῶν, ut loquitur Suidas’ (Rhenferd). How well at his instigation the Jews played the secondary rôle of *διάβολοι*, first against the Lord Himself, and then against his servants, appears in the Gospels (Luke xxiii. 2; John xix. 12), in the Acts (xvii. 5-8; xxiv. 2), and in all the early Church history. From a multitude of passages in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, as from Origen’s answer to Celsus (iii. 1; vi. 27), it is clear that they were the main authors of the calumnies against the Christians with which the malice of the heathen world was stimulated and fed, and by which that world sought to justify itself in the cruelties practised against them.

The manner in which this persecution of the saints is here traced to the direct agency of Satan, is very well worthy of observation. We sometimes assume that Christians were persecuted, because the truth for which they bore witness traversed the interests, affronted the pride, would have checked the passions of men; and this is most true; but we have not so reached to the ground of the matter. There is nothing more remarkable in the records which have come down to us of the early persecutions, and in this point they singularly illustrate the Scripture before us, than the sense which the confessors and martyrs, and those who afterwards narrate their sufferings and their triumphs, entertain and utter, that these great fights of affliction through which they were called to pass, were the immediate work of the devil, and no mere result

of the offended passions, prejudices, or interests of men. The enemies of flesh and blood, as mere tools and instruments, are nearly lost sight of by them in a constant reference to Satan as the invisible but most real author of all. And assuredly they had right. So much we might boldly say, even if we had not the warrant of such Scriptures as this. Thus, who that reads that story of the persecution of the saints at Lyons and Vienne, A.D. 177, happily preserved for us by Eusebius (*H. E.* v. 1) in the very words of the survivors (see Renan, *Marc-Aurèle*, p. 302 sqq.), that wondrous tale of persistent inventive cruelty on the part of the heathen, overmatched by a superhuman patience on the part of the faithful, but must feel that there is infinitely more here than a conflict of bad men with good? There is rather on the one side an outbreak from the bottomless pit, the might and malice of the devil, making war against God in the person of his saints; on the other a victory, not over evil men alone, but over Satan, so transcendent that it could only have been surpassed when Christ Himself beheld him fall as lightning from heaven (Luke x. 18). This reference to the devil as the primary author of all assaults upon the Church, the sense of which speaks out so strikingly in these Acts of the Gallic martyrs, speaks out hardly less strongly in others; thus see the *Ep. de S. Polycarpi Mart.* iii. 17, 19; *Mart. Ignat.* 7.

From the fact that our Translators have rendered *ἵνα πειρασθῆτε*, ‘that ye may be tried,’ we may certainly conclude that they contemplated these *πειρασμοί* rather as the gracious *trials* of God (cf. Jam. i. 2, 3; 1 Pet. i. 7) than the *temptations* of the devil (Job i. 5; ii. 6; Luke xxii. 31). Yet assuredly this is not so; and Tyndale and Cranmer, who translate, ‘to tempt you,’ are to be preferred; so

Marcus: 'Ut tentemini; non simplici probatione constantiæ, quo pacto Deus tentat suos, sed incitatione ad malum et infidelitatem, quo pacto Deus neminem tentat.' *Temptation* from the devil, not *trial* or proof from a Heavenly Father's hand, is that which, according to this warning word of the Lord, was in store for them. It is indeed perfectly true that the same event is oftentimes both the one and the other—God sifting and winnowing the man to separate his chaff from his wheat, the devil sifting and winnowing him in the hope that nothing else but chaff will be found in him (Luke xxii. 31). It is quite true also that *πειράζειν* is used in both senses; sometimes in a sense closely bordering upon that of *δοκιμάζειν*, and then ascribed to God, who, as the supreme *δοκιμαστής τῶν καρδιῶν*, tempts and proves his servants to show them what of sin, of infirmity, of unbelief is yet in their hearts; and showing them this, to leave them holier than before this temptation He found them (Heb. xi. 17; cf. Gen. xxii. 1; Exod. xv. 25; Deut. xiii. 3). At the same time *πειράζειν* is much oftener used of temptation *by the devil*, solicitation on his part *to evil* (Matt. iv. 1; 1 Cor. x. 13; Gal. vi. 1; 1 Thess. iii. 5; Heb. ii. 18; Jam. i. 13); and the words going immediately before, '*Behold the devil will cast some of you into prison,*' are decisive that the Lord is here warning his servants, as He did in the days of his personal ministry upon earth, against fierce assaults of their ghostly enemy which were close at hand, that so by watchfulness and prayer they might be able to stand in the evil day that was so near.

The temptations of imprisonment He especially adduces here. In the records of the Church's early conflicts with the heathen, we constantly find the prison doing its part; those who endured torture bravely being returned to prison,

that so it might be seen whether hunger and thirst, darkness and chains, would not be effectual in breaking down by little and little the courage and the steadfastness which had resisted manfully the first and more violent onset of the foe. Sometimes it would prove so. The Church's early story, furnishing in the main a glorious commentary on these words, furnishes a mournful commentary as well. When temptations such as the Lord here speaks of arrived, it would be ever seen that there were many weak brethren, and some false; and the Church, rejoicing over the steadfastness of multitudes among her children, had yet to mourn over the faltering infirmity of some, and the shameless apostasy of others (Eusebius, *H. E.* v. 1. 10; Cyprian, *De Laps.* 1, 2).

'*And ye shall have tribulation ten days.*' For ἐξἔτε ('*ye shall have*') Lachmann and others have received into the text ἐχῆτε ('*ye may have*'), which word equally with περιασθήτε will then depend on ἴνα. These '*ten days*,' during which the tribulation of Smyrna shall endure, have been very variously interpreted, some understanding by them a very long period (cf. Gen. xxxi. 41; Job xix. 3; Num. xiv. 22); and some a very short (Gen. xxiv. 55; Num. xi. 19). Those who interpret in the former sense have very commonly seen here allusion to the ten persecutions which the Church is often said to have passed through, during the three hundred years of its conflict with heathen Rome. It has been objected that this enumeration of exactly ten persecutions is altogether arbitrary; that, if we include in our list only those which had some right to be called general, as extending over the whole Roman empire, the persecutions would not be so many; if all those which reached any single city or province, they would be many more. But, setting this

objection aside, I am persuaded we must look for something very different here from an announcement of the great length of time over which the persecution would extend; the '*ten days*' declaring not the length, but the shortness of time within which all this tyranny would be overpast. I conclude this from the fact that only so will the words fall in with the whole temper and spirit of this verse, which is encouraging and consolatory throughout. Here, as so often elsewhere, the briefness of the trial is urged as a motive for its patient endurance (cf. Isai. xxvi. 20; liv. 8; Ps. xxx. 5; Matt. xxiv. 22; 2 Cor. iv. 17; 1 Pet. i. 6; v. 10).

'*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*'—More than one of the early Fathers have written an *Exhortatio ad Martyrium*, but what are they all, as compared with this? '*Unto death*' here is an intensive, not an extensive, term. Christ does not mean, 'to thy life's end,' contemplating life under aspects of time; but 'to the sharpest and worst which the enemy can inflict upon thee, even to death itself.' Dare and endure, the words would say, the worst which evil men can threaten and inflict, even death itself (Matt. x. 22; xxiv. 13; Ecclus. iv. 28). Marckius: '*Quam exigit [fidelitatem] usque ad mortem, non tam terminum temporis notans, quanquam et ad metæ nostræ finem sit perseverandum, quam quidem gradum mali, in quo fidelitas nostra demonstranda est, ut mortem ipsam in causâ fidei et pietatis subire non detractemus.*'

With the words of the promise which follow, '*and I will give thee a crown of life,*' compare 2 Esdr. ii. 42-47, which, however, it can hardly be doubted is the interpolation of some later Christian hand (see Lücke, *Offenb. d. Johan.* p. 155, 2d edit.). This '*crown of life,*' always

remaining in its essence the same, is not the less designated by a rich variety of images. Here, and with St. James (i. 12), it is ‘*a crown of life*’; with St. Paul, ‘*a crown of righteousness*’ (2 Tim. iv. 8; cf. Plutarch, *Philop. et Flam.* 3: *δικαιοσύνης καὶ χρηστότητος στέφανος*), ‘*a crown of rejoicing*’ (*καυχήσεως*, 1 Thess. ii. 19); with St. Peter, ‘*a crown of glory*’ (1 Pet. v. 4; cf. Heb. ii. 9); with Isaiah, ‘*a crown of beauty*’ (lii. 3, *στέφανος κάλλους*, LXX.; cf. *διάδημα τοῦ κάλλους*, Wisd. v. 17); with Solomon, ‘*a crown of graces*’ (*χαρίτων*, Prov. i. 9); with the same ‘*a crown of rich abundance*’ (*τρυφῆς*); with the Son of Sirach, ‘*a crown of exultation*’ (*ἀγαλλιάματος*, Ecclus. vi. 31); with the same ‘*a crown of wisdom*’ (*σοφίας*, i. 18); in the *Mart. S. Polycarpi*, ‘*a crown of incorruption*’ (*ἀφθαρσίας*, xvii. 19; cf. Eusebius, *H. E.* v. 1: *μέγας τῆς ἀφθαρσίας στέφανος*); for Ignatius, ‘*a crown of conflict*’ (*ἀθλήσεως*, *Mart.* 5, with probable reference to 2 Tim. ii. 5); for Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7, 14, ‘*a crown of virtue*’ (*ἀρετῆς*); for Clement of Alexandria ‘*a crown of amaranth*’ (*Pædag.* 2); for Sophocles ‘*a crown of fair fame*’ (*εὐκλείας*, *Ajax*, 457). Whether Lucian intended a sneer at these glorious promises of the Scripture, when he introduces the impostor Peregrinus, who had been among the Christians, though he died a Cynic, to declare his intention of setting, by a voluntary death, a golden crown on a golden life (*χρυσῶ βίῳ χρυσῆν κορώνην ἐπιθεῖναι*, *De Mort. Pereg.* § 33), may be questionable. That he has many such scoffs at the promises of Scripture, as at its miracles and other facts, no one who has at all studied the subject will be disposed to deny.

But a question offers itself here, Is this ‘*crown*’ the *diadem* of royalty (*βασίλειον*, 2 Sam. i. 10; 2 Chron.

xxiii. 11, lxx.), or the *garland* of victory, 'Krone' or 'Kranz'? I believe the former. It is quite true that *στέφανος* is seldom used in this sense, much oftener *διάδημα* (see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 23); yet the 'golden crowns' (*στέφανοι*) of ch. v. can only be *royal* crowns (cf. ver. 10); *στέφανος* too is the word by which all the Evangelists designate the crown of thorns, evidently a caricature of royalty, which was planted on the Saviour's brows. Did we indeed meet these words, 'a crown of life,' in the Epistles of St. Paul, we should be justified in saying that in all likelihood the wreath or garland of the victor in the games, the 'crown' in this sense, was intended. St. Paul was familiar with the Greek games, and freely drew his imagery from them (1 Cor. ix. 24-27; Phil. iii. 12; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 5; iv. 7); does not fear to contemplate the faithful under the aspect of runners (*θεόδρομοι*, as Ignatius, *ad Philad.* c. ii., calls them) and wrestlers in the games. His universal culture, his Hellenic as well as Jewish education, exempted him from any scruples in the employment of illustrations like these. In the same manner he speaks on two occasions of being poured out, and poured out as a libation; in which passages (Phil. ii. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 6) it is difficult not to think that he had the heathen sacrifices in his eye; at the same time this cannot be regarded as certain. Not so, however, the Christians of Palestine. Greek games and Greek sacrifices were strange to them, or only not strange, as they were the objects of their deepest abhorrence. This is sufficiently attested in the tumults and troubles which accompanied the introduction of the games by Herod the Great at Jerusalem, recorded at length by Josephus (*Antt.* xv. 8. 1-4). Nor indeed was this then for the first time seen. A similar attempt at an earlier day

helped not a little to fill up the cup of wrath which at length ran over in the rising of the Maccabees, and overthrow of the Greco-Syrian rule (1 Macc. i. 14; 2 Macc. iv. 12-20). Tertullian's point of view, who styles them (*Scorp.* 6) 'contentiosa solemnia et superstitiosa certamina Græcarum et religionum et voluptatum,' would very much have been theirs. And then, to me at least, decisive on this point is the fact, that nowhere else in the Apocalypse is there found a single image drawn from the range of heathen antiquity. The Book moves exclusively in the circle of Jewish imagery—either sacred or cabalistic; of imagery derived mainly from the inmost recesses of the temple service. The palms in the hands of the redeemed who stand before the throne (vii. 9) may seem an exception to the universality of this rule; but really are far from so being. It is quite true that the palm was for Greek and Roman a token of victory, but this 'palmiferous company,' to use Henry More's words, these happy palmers, do not stand before the throne as conquerors,—Tertullian's exposition, 'albati et palmis victoriæ insignes' (*Scorp.* 12), being at fault,—but as those who keep the true Feast of Tabernacles, the feast of rest, of all the weary toil in the wilderness accomplished and ended. As such, and to mark them for what they are, they bear, according to the injunctions of the Old Testament, the branches of palms in their hands (Lev. xxiii. 40; cf. Neh. viii. 15; 2 Macc. x. 7; John xii. 13; Josephus, *Antt.* xii. 13. 5); see some beautiful remarks on this point by Hengstenberg (*in loc.*), in part anticipated by Vitringa. I must needs then believe that these are *royal crowns* (cf. Ps. xxi. 3; cxxxii. 18), not *victorious garlands*, which the great Rewarder is promising here.¹

¹ The use on two occasions of ἵρις for the rainbow (Rev. iv. 3;

Ver. 11. ‘*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*’—This ‘*second death*,’ setting forth, as it does, the ‘*vita non vitalis*,’ the death in life of the lost, as contrasted with the life in death of the saved, is a phrase peculiar to the Apocalypse (cf. xx. 6, 14; xxi. 8); but is not uncommon in the later Jewish theology; indeed frequent in the Chaldee Paraphrase; Vitringa: ‘*Phrasis nata haud dubie in scholâ sanctorum virorum qui fidem et spem Ecclesiæ post reditum ex exilio Babylonico explicârunt.*’ But though the *word* is not on the lips of the Lord during his earthly life, He does not shrink from proclaiming the fearful *thing*. The δεύτερος θάνατος of this Book is the γένηνα of Matt. v. 29; Mark ix. 43-48; Luke xii. 5; the κόλασις αἰώνιος of Matt. xxv. 46; and from this Book itself receives this awful interpretation, namely, that it, the second death, is the lake of fire (20. 14). The phrase is itself a solemn witness and protest against the Sadduceeism and Epicureanism, which would make death natural the end-all of man’s existence. As there is a life beyond this present life for the faithful, so a death beyond the death which falls under our eye for the wicked; ὁ ὄντως θάνατος, as it is called in the *Epistle to Diognetus*, 10. ‘*Vita damnatorum mors est*,’ is the fearful gloss of Augustine; and again (*Serm.* cccvi. § 5): ‘*Mors vocatur, et nemo ibi moritur; satius et melius dixerim, nemo ibi vivit.*’ And Philo, though, so far as I am aware, he does not know this phrase, ‘*the second death*,’ has a terrible commentary upon it (*De Præm. et Poen.* 12): ἀνθρωποι μὲν γὰρ πέρασ τιμωριῶν εἶναι νομίζουσι θάνατον· ἐν δὲ τῷ θείῳ δικαστηρίῳ μόγις ἐστὶν

x. 1) instead of the more usual τόσον (Gen. ix. 13; Ezek. i. 28) approaches nearer to an exception from the general rule.

οὗτος ἀρχή. And going on to ask what is the punishment of the ungodly, he answers, ζῆν ἀποθνήσκοντα ἀεί, καὶ τρόπον τινὰ θάνατον ἀθάνατον ὑπομένειν καὶ ἀτελεύτητον, with more to the same effect; cf. *Leg. Alleg.* i. 33.

So much has been idly written upon names, not a little most idly on the names of these seven Churches, and the mystical meanings which they contain, that one shrinks from any seeming fellowship in such slight and unprofitable fancies; and yet it is difficult not to remember here that *σμύρνα*, the name of this suffering Church which should give out its sweetness in persecution and in death, is a subform of *μύρρα* (Lobeck, *Pathol.* p. 241); and that myrrh, an aromatic gum of Arabia, served for embalming the dead (John xix. 39; cf. Herodotus, ii. 40, 86), went up as incense before the Lord (Exod. xxx. 23), was one of the perfumes of the bridegroom (Ps. xlv. 8), and of the bride (Cant. iii. 6). All this Vitrिंगa has excellently urged: ‘Myrrha itaque nobis hic symbolice figurat graviores Ecclesie afflictiones, *amaras* equidem et ingratas carni, πρὸς τὸ παρόν, quod ad tempus præsens, sed ex quibus fructus provenit vere *salutaris*. Solet enim eas Deus suâ providentiâ Ecclesie immittere, ut electos et electorum fidem præserved a *corruptione*, et illos hoc etiam medio veluti *condiat* ad immortalitatem, et *fragrantiam* iis conciliet egregiam virtutum Christianarum, quarum exercitium persecutiones Ecclesie solent suscitare.’

III.

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF PERGAMUM.

REV. ii. 12-17.

Ver. 12. ‘*And to the Angel of the Church in Pergamos write.*’—A word or two may fitly find place here on the name of this city, as it appears in our Authorized Version. In the first place, why do our Translators, writing ‘*Pergamos,*’ and not ‘*Pergamus,*’ retain a Greek termination for it, and for it alone, among similar proper names? ‘*Assos*’ (Acts xx. 13, 14) is not a parallel case, for the Romans wrote ‘*Assos*’ as frequently as ‘*Assus,*’ and always wrote ‘*Chios,*’ which therefore is quite correct (Acts xx. 15). But if ‘*Pergamos,*’ then, by the same rule, ‘*Ephesos,*’ ‘*Miletos,*’ ‘*Timotheos,*’ and many more. And even against ‘*Pergamus,*’ though preferable to ‘*Pergamos,*’ there would still be something to object. Instances of the feminine, ἡ Πέργαμος (Ptolemy, i. 2), are excessively rare (see Lobeck, *Phrynichus*, p. 422); while the neuter, τὸ Πέργαμον in Greek, and ‘*Pergamum*’ in Latin, occur innumerable times (Xenophon, *Anab.* vii. 8. 8; Polybius, iv. 48. 2; Strabo, xiii. 4; Pliny, *H. N.* v. 33). I shall speak throughout of the city under this its more usual designation; being that, therefore, which St. John, had the word been employed by him in the nominative, which,

however, it is not, would in all likelihood have used. It was another illustrious city of Asia; *ἐπιφανὴς πόλις* in the language of Strabo (xiii. 4); 'longe clarissimum Asiæ Pergamum' in that of Pliny (*H. N.* v. 33). Although of high antiquity, its greatness, splendour, and dignity did not date very far back. It only attained these under the *Διάδοχοι*, of whom one made Pergamum the capital of his kingdom—the same kingdom which a later of his dynasty, Attalus III., bequeathed to the Romans (B.C. 133). It was famous as the birthplace of Galen, next to Hippocrates the most illustrious physician of the ancient world; famous too for its splendid library, collected in rivalry with that of Alexandria; our 'parchment' (pergamenum) deriving its name from thence; for magnificent temples of Zeus, of Athêne, and of Apollo; but most of all for the worship of Æsculapius (Tacitus, *Annal.* iii. 63; Xenophon, *Anab.* vii. 8. 23), the remains of whose temple outside the walls of the city with not a few other magnificent ruins, may still be seen. On the architectural splendours of the city which still survive there is a most interesting paper in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 1881, while a letter in the *Times*, Dec. 28 of the same year, is full of information on several of the ruined cities of Asia Minor, this included; and on all the costly treasures of art which still wait an ingathering there.—'These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges,' or, not to make a variation in the English where in the Greek there is none, for 'the sharp sword with two edges' read 'the sharp two-edged sword;' cf. i. 16.

Ver. 13. 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.'—This may not sound, at the first hearing, a reassuring word; and yet indeed it is eminently such. None of the peculiar difficulties and dangers

which beset the Church at Pergamum are concealed from Christ. We indeed ask now, and it is not easy to answer the question, Why should Pergamum more than any other corrupt heathen city have been '*Satan's seat,*' or '*Satan's throne,*' as in the R. V. it more accurately is rendered; for as *θρόνος* is constantly in this Book translated '*throne*' when applied to the powers of heaven (iv. 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10; v. 1, and often), it should be so also when applied to the hellish caricature of the heavenly kingdom; to the kingdom which the rulers of the darkness of this world seek to set up over against the kingdom of light. The question has been variously answered. Ewald, and many before him, find allusion here to the fane of Æsculapius, — *Θεὸς Σωτήρ* he was called,—where lying miracles of healing were vaunted to be performed, Satan seeking by the aid of these to counterwork the work of the Gospel. His worship no doubt was very prevalent here ('*Pergameus Deus*' Martial calls him); yet for all this the explanation is quite insufficient. All which we can securely conclude from this language is that from one cause or another Pergamum enjoyed the bad pre-eminence of being the headquarters in these parts of resistance to Christ and his Gospel. *Why* it should have thus deserved the name of '*Satan's throne,*' so emphatically repeated a second time at the end of this verse, '*where Satan dwelleth,*' must remain one of the unsolved riddles of these Epistles. Some circumstances, of which no certain notice has reached us, may have especially stirred up the fanaticism of the heathen there.

'And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.'—There is a confused multitude of small varia-

tions of reading here, though none seriously affecting the sense. There was probably an *anacoluthon* in the sentence originally, which transcribers would not let be; but attempted by various devices to palliate or remove (see H. Ewald, *Johan. Script.* vol. ii. p. 67). It is evident from the testimony borne here to the Pergamene Church, that many there, probably the Angel himself, had shown an honourable steadfastness in the faith; had been confessors of it; though possibly only one, Antipas, had resisted, or had been called to resist, unto blood. Eusebius (*H. E.* iv. 15) records several martyrs who at a somewhat later day were at Pergamum faithful to death, and received a crown of life. Attalus also, it may be mentioned, who played so valiant a part in the persecutions of Lyons and Vienne, and won a foremost place in that noble company of Gallic martyrs, was a Pergamene (*ib.* v. 1, 14, 38, 47).

Of Antipas, except from the glorious record which the Lord bears to him here, we know absolutely nothing. It is difficult to understand the silence of all ecclesiastical history respecting so famous a martyr, one singled out by Christ to such honour as this; for silent in regard of him ecclesiastical history must be confessed to be; that which Tertullian (*Scorp.* 12) and other early writers tell us about him, being merely devised *in fugam vacui*, and drawn exclusively from the passage before us. They manifestly *know* nothing about him except what they find here. Later Latin martyrologies, of course, know a great deal. According to these he was Bishop of Pergamum, and by command of Domitian was shut up, Perillus-like, in a brazen bull, afterwards made red-hot; and by this painful passage entered into life. Hengstenberg has a curious explanation of this name, though it is not perfectly original; he has derived at least the hint of it from

Aretius. Pressing the fact that almost all other names, he would say all, are symbolic in this Book, as Jezebel, Balaam, Egypt, Sodom, Babylon, Jerusalem, he urges that this must be symbolic too. But Ἀντίπας, what is it but a word formed on the same model as Ἀντίχριστος? and as this is made up of ἀντί and Χριστός, so Ἀντίπας of ἀντί and πᾶς, and Antipas is one who for Christ's sake has dared to stand out *against all*, an ἀντίκοσμος: cf. Jer. xx. 10; xv. 10, 'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention *to the whole earth*;' which must be the character and condition of an eminently godly man set in the midst of a world which lieth in the wicked one (Jam. iv. 4; Acts iv. 19; v. 29). A later commentator contemptuously dismisses this with the observation that Ἀντίπας is only an abbreviation of Ἀντίπατρος, as Νικόμας of Νικομήδης, Μηνᾶς of Μηνόδωρος, and the like. I am certainly not disposed to rate this explanation higher than an ingenious fancy, a *lusus* of the critic's art, but see little or no force in this argument against it. Antipas, once formed, enters into all the rights which its new form confers upon it, irrespective of the process by which it may have attained this form. But it is not worth while to vindicate from an insufficient objection what will not commend itself a whit the more, even after this objection is set aside.

Ver. 14. *'But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.'*—Those *'that hold the doctrine of Balaam'* must be identical with the Nicolaitans of ver. 6, 15; the latter verse seems to leave no doubt on the matter. The mention of Balaam as the tempter and seducer would of

itself sufficiently explain the nature of the sins to which he tempted and seduced (Num. xxv. 1-9; xxxi. 15, 16); but the sins are here expressly named. First, however, something may be said on the words *ὁς ἐδίδασκε τῷ Βαλάκ*, which we, and I believe rightly, have rendered, ‘*who taught Balac.*’ Hengstenberg indeed, and Bengel before him, on the strength of this dative, a *dativus commodi* as they regard it, joined with the fact that *διδάσκειν* habitually governs an accusative of the person who is the object of the teaching (thus ver. 20 in this very chapter), argue that we ought to translate ‘*who taught for Balac,*’ that is, in the interests of Balac, to please him. They allege in support of this, that there is no hint in Scripture of Balaam having suggested *to Balac* to put these temptations in the way of the children of Israel; the parting of the two is recorded Num. xxiv. 25, nor is there any reason, they urge, to suppose that they ever met again; it was to the Moabitish women themselves, to Balac’s people, but not to Balac himself, that Balaam suggested the placing these stumbling blocks in their way. Assuredly this is a mistake. The construction proposed is much too artificial for the Apocalypse; the dative after *ἐδίδασκεν* is the penetrating of a Hebrew idiom through the forms of the Greek language; and there is nothing at Num. xxxi. 16 to compel us to understand that Balaam’s communication with the daughters of Moab was *immediate*, and not through the intervention of the king; cf. Josephus, *Antt.* iv. 6. 6, who takes this intervention for granted; and Vitrina, *Obs. Sac.* iv. 9. 29.

Two words claim attention here, *σκάνδαλον* and *εἰδωλόθυτον*. *Σκάνδαλον*, a later form of *σκανδάληθρον* (Aristophanes, *Acharnen.* 686), and *σκανδαλίζειν* (there is no *σκανδαληθρίζειν*, see Rost and Palm, *Lex.*), occur only

in the Septuagint and the New Testament, and in writings immediately dependant upon these (see Suicer, *Theol.* s. v.); being almost always in them employed in a tropical sense; Lev. xxix. 14 and Judith v. 1 are exceptions. *Σκάνδαλον* is properly a trap (joined often with *παγίς*, Josh. xxiii. 13; Ps. cxl. 9; Rom. xi. 9), or more precisely that part of the trap on which the bait is laid, and the touching of which causes the trap to close upon its prey ('mobile decipulæ tigillum,' Fritzsche on Rom. xiv. 13); then generally any loop or noose set in the path, which should entangle the foot of the unwary walker, and cause him to stumble and fall; thus *σκάνδαλον*=*πρόσκομμα* (Rom. xiv. 13) and *σκανδαλίζειν*=*προσκοπτειν* (Matt. iv. 6; Rom. ix. 32); and next any stone, or hindrance of any kind (Hesychius explains it by *ἐμποδισμός*), which should have the same effect (1 Pet. ii. 7). Satan, then, as *the Tempter*, is the great putter of 'scandals,' 'stumbling blocks,' or 'offences,' in the path of men; his sworn servants, a Balaam or a Jeroboam (1 Kin. xiv. 16), are the same consciously; while all of us, by careless walking, by seeking what shall please ourselves rather than what shall edify others (Rom. xiv. 15-23; 1 Cor. viii. 10), or by counselling our brethren in the same sense (Matt. xvi. 23), are in danger of unconsciously, but not unguiltily, being the same; there is none that is not deeply concerned in the warning of Matt. xviii. 7. All have need to ask that they may be what St. Paul prayed that the Philippian (i. 10) might be, *ἀπρόσκοποι* themselves (the *ἄπταιστοι* of Jude 24 rests on the same image), and that they may put no *πρόσκομμα*, no *σκάνδαλον*, in the path of others.

Εἰδωλόθυτον is a New Testament word to express what the heathen sacrifices were, as they presented themselves to the eye of a Christian or a Jew, namely things offered,

not to God, but to idols.¹ The Gentiles themselves expressed the same by *ἱερόθυτον* (which at 1 Cor. x. 28 is the better reading, St. Paul there assuming a Gentile to be speaking, and employing, if not an honourable, yet at any rate a *neutral*, word), or by *θεόθυτον*, which the Greek purists preferred (Lobeck, *Phrynichus*, p. 139). It will be worth while here to consider under what plea any who so much as named the name of Christ could consent to eat of these idol-meats, and yet claim to retain allegiance to that name. The temptation to this was one which addressed itself exclusively to the converts from heathendom. Of those who attached themselves to the Church of Christ from the stock of Abraham, we may be quite sure that there was not one who was so much tempted to this sin; their whole previous education, training them into an abhorrence of such defilement, was for them a sufficient safeguard against it (Num. xxv. 2; Ps. cvi. 28; Dan. i. 8; Tob. i. 10, 11). It was otherwise with the proselytes from the heathen world; with the Gentile Christians gathered in, it might be, to the Church of Christ out of some corrupt and luxurious Greek city, as Corinth for example. Refusal to partake in the idol-meats was for one of these refusal to partake not merely in the idolatry which he had renounced, but in very much else which he was not at all so entirely prepared to forego. It involved abstinence from almost every public and every private festivity, a withdrawal in great part from the whole social

¹ It is a notable example of the extreme inconsistency of our Authorized Version in rendering the same word in different places, that *εἰδωλόθυτα* is rendered in four different ways: it is '*meats* offered to idols' (Acts xv. 29); it is '*things* offered to idols' (Acts xxi. 25); it is '*things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols*' (1 Cor. viii. 4); it is '*things sacrificed* unto idols' (Rev. ii. 14).

life of his time; for sacrifice had in one way or other bound itself up in almost every act of this social life. We have a singular evidence of this in the fact that 'to kill' and 'to sacrifice' had in Greek almost become identical; *θύειν*, which had originally meant the latter, meaning the former now. The poor man, offering a slain beast, after the priest and the altar had received their shares, would sell the remainder in the market; the rich would give this which remained over away. From one cause or another there was a certainty at many entertainments of meeting these sacrificial meats, there was a possibility of meeting them at all. The question therefore was one which, like that of caste at the present day in India, would continually obtrude itself, which could not be set aside and its presence ignored.¹

Already we find at the Council of Jerusalem the Apostles resolving that among the few 'necessary things' (Acts xv. 28) which must be imperatively required of the Gentile converts, abstinence from 'the pollutions of idols' (ver. 20), or, as in the more formal decree it is expressed, 'meats offered to idols' (ver. 29), was one. Some two years later various cases of conscience have occurred exactly in that Church where beforehand we might have looked for them, namely at Corinth, and St. Paul has been called upon to give his judgment about them. Some it would seem there, who boasted of their *γυνῶσις*, affirmed that they saw through the whole heathen idolatry, saw that it was a fraud and a lie; to them an idol was nothing; what fear then that they should become partakers with the idol through partaking of the idol-meats? and these, in

¹ See an excellent Essay on this subject in Dean Stanley's *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, with this title, *The Sacrificial Feasts of the Heathen*, vol. i. pp. 149-152.

an exaggerated assertion of their liberty, sat openly at meat in the very idol-temple itself (1 Cor. viii. 10). So too at a somewhat later date, in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, the Jew Trypho makes it a charge against the Christians that many of them partook of idol-sacrifices, affirming that they were in no way injured by them (c. 35); to whom the Christian Father replies that these Marcionites, Valentinians, and the rest, might usurp the name of Christian, but that the Catholic Church repudiated them utterly, in no way acknowledged them as her children. From Irenæus (i. 6. 3) we learn that they not merely thus ate of the idol-meats, boasting that they were in nothing defiled by them, but took a foremost share in the celebration of the heathen festivals. Others, in an opposite extreme and excess of scrupulosity, were greatly troubled lest the meat they innocently bought in the market, or partook of at the house of a heathen friend, might have been offered in sacrifice, and so they unwittingly defiled (1 Cor. x. 25, 27). All will no doubt remember the wonderful wisdom and love wherewith St. Paul treats these various cases, strengthening and guiding the weak, rebuking and restraining the strong or those that thought themselves strong. Some, however, of these latter continued to allow themselves in these dangerous liberties, degenerating only too easily into scandalous excesses; although, after such decisions, first of the Council at Jerusalem, and afterwards of St. Paul, not any longer *within* the bosom of the Church, but without it; and one may see in the Nicolaitans the legitimate spiritual descendants of those Gnostics (Gnostics at least in the bud), who were not brought back to humbler, more loving, more self-denying courses by the earnest remonstrances of the Apostle.—In the same way as we have at Acts xv. 20, the

prohibition of fornication, joined with that of eating things offered to idols, so here the two sins are linked together. The impure character of the heathen festivals caused that the two constantly went hand in hand (Eusebius, *H. E.* iv. 7. 10).

Ver. 15. '*So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.*' The concluding words of this verse, '*which thing I hate,*' have no right to a place in the text, having been transferred from ver. 6 of this same chapter. As Balac had Balaam, a false prophet and seducer, so had the Angel of Pergamum some that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; and whom he notwithstanding endured. In this matter the Angel of Ephesus had more of the mind of Christ than he had (ver. 6); wanting as he did that earnest hatred of evil, which should have made such a presence and such a teaching intolerable to him; while of that other Ephesian Angel it could be said, that what Christ hated, he hated too.

Ver. 16. '*Repent;*' or '*Repent therefore,—or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*'—Out of this feebleness of moral indignation against evil it had come to pass that this Angel had not testified with sufficient energy against the Nicolaitans and their doctrine; he could not say with Paul, 'I am pure from the blood of all men' (Acts xx. 26). But now repenting and faithfully witnessing against their errors, he would either recover them for the truth, or else drive them wholly from the communion of the Church,—in either case a gain. But this if he fail to do, the Lord will come quickly, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth. We have, I am persuaded, another allusion here to the history of Balaam, namely to Num. xxxi. 8 (cf. Josh. xiii. 22): 'Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew

with the sword;’ this sword of the children of Israel being indeed the sword of God; cf. Num. xxii. 31. Vitranga: ‘Verba hæc manifeste respiciunt historiam Bileami: in quâ habemus, primo quidem, Angelum Domini *stricto ense* se Bileamo, populo Dei maledicere meditanti, in viâ opposuisse, et, si instituto perseveraret, exitium illi minatum esse; deinde Bileamum, et Israelitas qui consilium illius secuti fuerant, jussu Dei gladio periisse.’

In that, ‘*I will fight against them,*’ it might seem at first sight as if there was only a threat for these ungodly workers; and not for the Angel who had been faithful in the main, nor for the better portion of the Church. But this is not so. When God has a controversy with a Church or with a people, the *tribulation* reaches all, however the *judgment* may be only for his foes. The gold and the dross are cast alike into the furnace, the dross to be consumed in it, the gold to come out from it purer than before. The holy prophet is entangled outwardly in the same doom with the ungodly king (Jer. xxxix. 4; xliii. 6; cf. Matt. xxiv. 20, 21). There may be, there assuredly will be, on the part of the faithful, a separation from the sin—there is seldom an exemption from the suffering—of such a time. This suffering finds out all. It is well that it should be so; that there should be nothing in the usual course of God’s judgments to flatter in any the selfish hope of avoiding a share in the woe. Enough for any to escape the woe within the woe, namely, the sense of this suffering as the utterance of the just wrath of God.

Ver. 17. ‘*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.*’—Omit the words ‘*to eat.*’—Doubtless allusion is here to the manna which

at God's express command Moses caused to be laid up before the Lord in the Sanctuary (Exod. xvi. 32-34; cf. Heb. ix. 4). This manna, as being thus laid up in the Holy Place, obtained the name of '*hidden*,'—'*occultatum*' or '*reconditum*,' as Cocceius presses that it should be rendered, not '*occultum*;' for it is not *κρυπτόν* in the original, but *κεκρυμμένον*; not therefore '*latens* manna' as in Tertullian (*Scorp.* 12), but '*absconditum*' as in the Vulgate. It is true that many commentators, as Hengstenberg, omit any reference to this, and some expressly deny that any such reference exists; but Vitranga rightly: 'Ducit autem phrasis nos manifeste ad cogitandum de mannâ illo, quod ex jussu Dei in urnâ reponendum erat in sacratissimo Tabernaculi conclavi, per divinam providentiam ab omni corruptione præservandum; quod manna vere symbolum fuit Christi virtute obedientiæ suæ in cælum translati, et ibi delitescens, usque quo Ecclesia ipsius luctam suam in his terris absolverit.' The question, what we shall exactly understand by this '*hidden manna*,' and the eating of it, has not always been answered with precision. Origen characteristically understands by it the inner mystical sense of Scripture as distinguished from the outward form and letter (*Hom. 9 in Exod.*): 'Urna mannæ reposita, intellectus Verbi Dei subtilis et dulcis.' For the Mystics it is in general that grace and goodness of God which can only be known by those who have themselves actually tasted it; thus one of these: 'Hujus spiritualis et occulti mannæ sapor latet in occulto, nisi gustando sentiatur.' I take it, however, that this '*hidden manna*' represents a more central benefit even than these; moreover, like all the other promises of these Epistles, it represents a benefit pertaining to the future kingdom of glory, and not to the present kingdom of grace. I would not

indeed affirm that this promise has not prelibations which will be tasted in the present time; for the life eternal commences on this side of the grave, and not first on the other; and here in the wilderness Christ is the bread from heaven, the bread of God, the true manna, of which those that eat shall never die (John vi. 31-33, 48-51). Nay, more than this; since his Ascension He is in some sort a '*hidden manna*' for them now. Like that manna laid up in the Sanctuary before the Testimony, He too, withdrawn from sight, but in a human body, and bearing our flesh, is yet exempted from the law of corruption under which all other children of men have lain (Exod. xvi. 20, 33, 34; Acts ii. 27, 31). But this promise of the gift of '*the hidden manna*' is misunderstood, or at any rate is scanted of its full meaning, unless we look on to something more and higher than this. The words imply that, however hidden now, it shall not remain hidden evermore; and the best commentary on them is to be found at 1 Cor. ii. 9; 1 John iii. 2. The seeing of Christ as He is, of the latter passage, and through this beatific vision the being made like to Him, is identical with this eating of the hidden manna; which shall, as it were, be then brought forth from the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies of God's immediate presence, where it was withdrawn from sight so long, that all may partake of it; the glory of Christ, now shrouded and concealed, being then revealed at once to his people and *in* them (Col. iii. 4). Ælciu: '*Apte ergo illa satietas cælestis gloriæ manna [absconditum?] vocatur, quia juxta Pauli vocem nec oculus vidit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus diligentibus se.*' Richard of St. Victor quotes in illustration Ps. xxx. 20: '*Quam magna multitudo dulcedinis tuæ, Domine, quam abscondisti timentibus te.*'

There has been, and there will be again, occasion to observe, that in almost all these promises there is a peculiar adaptation of the promise to the self-denial by which it will have been won. Witsius notes this here, and draws out very beautifully the inner sweetness of this promise (*Miscell. Sac.* vol. i. p. 692): ‘Eas [profanas epulas] si quis generosâ fidei constantiâ, una cum omnibus blandientis seculi deliciis atque illicitis fortiter spreverit, sciat se satiatum iri suavissimis divinæ tam gratiæ quam gloriæ epulis, quarum suavitatem nemo rite æstimare novit, nisi qui gustavit. Propterea autem *mannæ absconditæ* comparantur, id est, illi quæ in urnâ aureâ in abdito loco asservanda, coram facie Jehovæ seposita fuit, I. Quia quod præcipuum est in illâ dulcedinis Christi participatione reservatur cum Christo in cælis (Col. iii. 3; 2 Tim. i. 12). II. Quia mundanorum hominum nemo dulcedinem hujus novit (Joh. xiv. 17); immo ne ipsi fideles quidem antequam experiantur (1 Joh. iii. 2). III. Quia communio ista non in diem est, uti manna quotidiana, sed perpetua, uti illa quæ seposita coram Domino a putrefactione et vermibus immunis erat (Joh. vi. 27), et propterea profanis Pergamensium epulis immensum anteferenda.’

‘And will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.’—‘White’ is everywhere the colour and livery of heaven; and nowhere with a greater or so great an emphasis, or with so frequent iteration, as in this Book. Thus of the Son of God we are told, ‘His head and his hairs were *white* like wool, as *white* as snow’ (i. 14). Then besides this ‘*white* stone’ we have ‘*white* raiment’ (iii. 5), ‘*white* robes’ (vii. 9), ‘a *white* cloud’ (xiv. 14), ‘fine linen clean and *white*’ (xix. 8, 14), ‘*white* horses’ (xix. 11, 14),

'a great *white* throne' (xx. 11). With these passages compare Dan. vii. 9; Matt. xvii. 2; xxviii. 3; Mark ix. 3; xvi. 5; John xx. 12; Acts i. 10. The sense of the fitness of white to serve as a symbol of absolute purity speaks out in many ways; it would do so singularly in the Latin 'castus,' if Döderlein's suggestion (*Lat. Syn.* vol. iii. p. 196) that 'castus' is a participle of 'candeo' could be admitted. It may be well to observe that '*white*' as this colour of heaven, is not the mere absence of other colour, not the dull 'albus,' but the bright 'candidus;' glistening white—as is evident from many passages; for instance, from a comparison of Matt. xxviii. 3 and Luke xxiv. 4 with John xx. 12; of Rev. xx. 11 (λευκὸς θρόνος) with its original, Dan. vii. 9 (θρόνος αὐτοῦ φλόξ πυρός); and from those passages just now referred to, which relate to the Transfiguration. It is the character of intense white to be shining; thus 'niteo' (= 'niviteo') is connected with 'nix;' λευκός with 'lux' (see Donaldson, *New Cratylus*, § 269; Pott, *Etym. Forsch.* vol. iii. p. 247); λευκός and λαμπρός are used as convertible terms, Rev. xix. 8, 14; while at Acts x. 30, λευκῆ and λαμπρᾶ are different readings; and at Cant. v. 11, the Septuagint has λευκός and Symmachus λαμπρός.

And as '*white*,' so also '*new*' belongs eminently to this Book; being one of the key-words of it; He who is the giver of this revelation everywhere setting forth Himself as the only renewer of all which sin had made old; the author of a new creation even in the midst of a decaying and dying world; and thus we have besides the '*new* name' here (cf. iii. 12), the '*new* Jerusalem' (iii. 12), the '*new* song' (v. 9), the '*new* heaven and the *new* earth' (xxi. 1), and finally '*all things new*' (xxi. 5); with

all which we may profitably compare Ps. xxxiii. 3; cxliv. 9; Isai. xlii. 10; lxii. 2; lxxv. 17; Jer. xxxi. 31; Ezek. xi. 19; xxxvi. 26.

But though it is not difficult to fix the symbolic significance of 'white' and 'new' in this Book, it must be freely admitted that we still wait an entirely satisfactory explanation of this 'white stone' with the 'new name' written in it. The greater number of expositors, especially the older ones, start from an assumption to which no objection can be made, namely, that there was in ancient times something festal, fortunate, of good omen, in white pebbles or beans. Thus the Greek phrase λευκή ἡμέρα, or λευκὸν ἡμέρα (Æschylus, *Pers.* 305), is commonly derived from a custom ascribed to the Scythians or Thracians, of indicating each happy day which they spent with a white stone placed in an urn, each unhappy with a black. After death, as those or these exceeded in number, their lives were counted happy or miserable (Pliny, *H. N.* vii. 41; the Younger Pliny, *Ep.* vi. 11; Martial, ix. 53: 'Dies nobis Signandi melioribus lapillis,' xii. 34). Or there is another explanation of the 'white day,' connecting it still with the white stone or bean, I mean that given by Plutarch in his *Life of Pericles*, c. 64. At the siege of Samos, fearing that his soldiers would be weary with its length (I quote North's translation), 'he divided his army into eight companies, whom he made to draw lots, and that company which lighted upon the white bean, they should be quiet and make good cheer, while the other seven fought. And they say that from thence it came that when any have made good cheer, and taken pleasure abroad, they do yet call it a *white day*, because of the white bean.'

But how, it may be asked, is all this brought to bear on the promise of the 'white stone' to the faithful here?

The earliest attempt to find help in this quarter is that of the Greek commentator Andreas. He sees allusion in these words to the white pebble, by placing which in the ballot-box the Greek judges pronounced the sentence of acquittal ($\psi\eta\phiοι$ $\sigma\acute{\omega}\zetaουσαι$ they were therefore called), as by the black of condemnation; a custom expressed in the well-known lines of Ovid (*Metam.* xv. 41, 42):—

‘Mos erat antiquus, niveis atrisque lapillis,
His damnare reos, illis absolvere culpæ.’

But, not to speak of a grave fault, of which I shall presently speak, common to this and almost every other explanation of these words which is offered, this one is manifestly inadequate; the absolving pebble was not *given* to the acquitted, as this is to the victor, nor do we hear of any name written upon it.

Others see allusion to the *tessera* (it too was called $\psi\eta\phiος$), which the conquerors at the Olympic or other solemn games (the $\delta\lambdaυμπιον\acute{\iota}και$, $\acute{\iota}ερου\acute{\iota}και$) received from the master of the games; which $\psi\eta\phiος$ gave ever after to him who received it certain honorary distinctions and privileges, as for example, the right of free access to the public entertainments. So Arethas, Gerhard (*Loci Theoll.* vol. ii. p. 327), and others; while Vitringa is obliged to confess that he can only explain the symbol by combining together these two customs of the absolving pebble, and the *tessera* given to the victor in the games; which two in the higher interpretation must be blended into one: ‘Ut tamen verum fatear, probabile videri possit Dominum orationem suam hoc loco ita temperâsse, ut non ad simplicem aliquem ritum, apud Græcos receptum, hic loci alluserit, sed phrasin suam mutuatus sit a duobus illis ritibus supra commemoratis, inter se compositis, qui licet diversi fuerint generis, in tertio tamen, quod dicitur, inter se conveniebant.’

But all these explanations, and others which it would be tedious to enumerate, even if they were more satisfactory, and they appear to me most unsatisfactory, are affected with the same fatal weakness, namely, that they are borrowed from *heathen* antiquity, while this Book moves exclusively within the circle of sacred, that is, of Jewish, imagery and symbols; nor is the explanation of its symbols in any case to be sought beyond this circle. All which on this matter was said in respect of the ‘*crown of life*’ (ii. 10) finds its application here. It is true that Hengstenberg, whose interpretation I have not yet mentioned, avoids this mistake, but only by, in fact, denying that the ‘*white stone*’ means anything at all. It has for him no significance or independent value of its own, being introduced merely for the sake of the ‘*new name*’ which is written upon it, and that it may serve as a vehicle for this name, being as such entirely subordinate to it. Few, I am persuaded, reading the words of the promise, with the emphasis which the Lord lays on the twice-repeated mention of the stone, and noting the independent place which it occupies as itself a gift, whatever other gifts might be associated with it, will be content to acquiesce in this, or to regard as a solution what is in fact merely an evasion, of the difficulty which the words present.

But to return. The first necessary condition of any interpretation which should be accepted as satisfactory being this, that it should be sacred and not heathen, at the same time this is not the only one. There appear to me two other necessary conditions, the non-fulfilment of which is fatal to any exposition; the fulfilment of them, on the contrary, not being itself proof that the right interpretation has been seized; but only a *conditio sine quâ non*, and up to a certain point implying a probability that this

has been attained. Besides thus being Hebrew or sacred, and not heathen or profane, which I believe is the universal law of all Apocalyptic symbolism, the solution must in this particular instance refer to the wilderness period of Jewish history, in the same way as the '*hidden manna*' does. I must ask the reader to suspend his demand for a proof of this assertion till we have reached the very last of the promises, when the course, order, and succession of them all will be considered. And, in the second place, it must be capable of being brought into some unity with that other promise, '*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna;*' there must be some bond of connexion between the two. I conclude this not merely from the natural fitness of things, but from the analogy of all the other promises made to the other Churches. In every other case the promise is either absolutely single, as at ii. 7, 11; iii. 21; or single in its central idea, as at ii. 26-28; iii. 5, 12, which I shall have the opportunity of showing. This being so, it is very improbable that the present should be an exception to the rule, and that here two entirely disparate promises should be arbitrarily linked together.

The only solution I know which fulfils all these conditions, is one proposed by Züllig (*Offenb. Johannis*, vol. i. pp. 408-454). It has found no favour or acceptance whatever, having been indeed by him encumbered with so many absurdities that this could scarcely have been otherwise. Fully acknowledging my obligations to him for the original suggestion of it, and for some of the arguments by which it is supported, I must yet claim to set it forth independently of him, nor is he in any way responsible for my statement of it.

Starting then from a reconsideration of the word

ψῆφος, this, it may be observed, is sometimes used in the later Greek for a *precious* stone; thus ψῆφος δακτυλική, the gem in a seal-ring worn on the finger. Neither is there in the epithet λευκός (not ‘albus,’ but ‘candidus’) anything which renders this unlikely here, but rather the contrary; a diamond, for instance, being of the purest glistening white. The ψῆφος λευκή then may be, not what we commonly begin with taking for granted it must be, a white pebble, but a precious stone, shining white, a diamond. But may not the mysterious Urim and Thummim have been exactly this? First, let me observe, by way of preoccupying a difficulty on the threshold, that whatever this may have been, it was not two things, but two names for one and the same thing (see Bähr, *Symbolik d. Mos. Cult.* vol. ii. pp. 109, 110); often therefore called only the Urim (Num. xxvii. 21; 1 Sam. xxviii. 6). Sparing my readers the learning which might easily be transcribed to any amount from the many elaborate treatises devoted to the inquiry as to what this Urim and Thummim might be, I will state the conclusions to which those who have studied the matter most profoundly have arrived. They are agreed that it was some precious thing which the High Priest bore within the *Choschen*, or square breastplate of judgment; this being doubled back upon itself, to the end that like a purse it might contain the treasure committed to it (Exod. xxviii. 15-30; Lev. viii. 8), and with all its costly jewellery and elaborate workmanship existing for this object, quite as much as the ark existed for the sake of the tables of the law. But what precious thing this Urim may have been is shrouded in mystery; only as that in the purse, and for which the purse was made, is likely to have been *more* precious than the purse itself, if *that* was set with its twelve

precious stones, each with the name of a tribe engraven on it, in *this* we are led to look for a stone rarer and more costly than them all; and it is certainly very noticeable that among the twelve stones of the breastplate the diamond does not appear; for the mention of it in our Version (Exod. xxviii. 18) is confessedly a mistake;—as though this stone had been reserved for a higher honour and dignity still.

Then further, no one knows, probably no one ever knew, what was graven on the Urim; except indeed the High Priest; who, consulting it that he might in some way obtain through it lively oracles from God, in matters which greatly concerned the weal or woe of the people (Num. xxvii. 21; 1 Sam. xxiii. 9-12; xxx. 7, 8), could not have remained ignorant of this. It is generally conjectured, however, to have been the holy Tetragrammaton, the ineffable name of God. It is difficult to conceive it to have been anything else. I need hardly ask the reader who has followed me thus far to note how well this agrees with the words before us, *‘and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.’* Many are led away from the right interpretation of these last words, by referring this *‘receiveth it’* to the *‘name,’* and not to the *‘stone;’* they read as though it was written, *‘saving he that receiveth this name,’*—when, as I feel sure, we ought to read it, *‘saving he that receiveth this stone.’* They assume the overcomer’s *own name* to be that written on this stone; and draw from these words an intimation that, just as the mystery of regeneration is known only to the new-born, so the yet higher glory of heaven only to him that is partaker of it (1 Cor. xiii. 9); which all is most true, and a new name is often used to express a new blessedness (Isai. lxii. 2; lxv. 15); but yet it is not the

truth of the promise here. The 'new name' here is something even better than this. It is the new name of God or of Christ, 'my new name' (cf. iii. 12); some revelation of the glory of God, only in that higher state capable of being communicated by Him to his people, and which they only can understand who have actually received; for it is a *knowing* which is identical with a *being*; and that word in old time ascribed to the Lord, 'My mystery is for Me, and for the sons of my house' (cf. Isai. xxiv. 10), stands fast, whether actually spoken by Him, or only ascribed to Him (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* v. 10. 64).

How excellently well the promise, so understood, matches with the other promise of 'the hidden manna,' which goes hand in hand with it. It was said at the outset of this inquiry, that there ought to be an inner bond between the two parts of the promise; and such, according to this interpretation, there will be. 'The hidden manna' and the 'white stone' are not merely united in time, belonging both to the wilderness period of the history of God's people; but they are united as both representing high-priestly prerogatives, which the Lord should at length impart to all his people, kings and priests to God, as He will then have made them all. If any should be privileged to eat of 'the hidden manna,' who but the High Priest, who alone had entrance into the Holy Place where it was laid up? If any should have knowledge of what was graven on the Urim, who but the same High Priest, in whose keeping it was, and who was bound by his very office to consult it? The mystery of what was written there, shut to every other, would be open to him. In lack of any more satisfying explanation of the promise of the 'white stone' with the 'new name' written upon it, I venture to suggest that the key to it may possibly be here.

IV.

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA.

REV. ii. 18-29.

Ver. 18. ‘*And unto the Angel of the Church in Thyatira write.*’—The Roman road from Pergamum to Sardis left Thyatira, as we are told by Strabo (xiii. 4), a little to the left; St. John is led ‘in the Spirit’ by the same route which he may often in time past have travelled in the course of his apostolic visitations. Thyatira, a city of no first-rate dignity, ‘*inhonora civitas*’ the Elder Pliny goes so far as to call it (v. 33), was a Macedonian colony (Strabo, xiii. 4); and it may be looked at as a slight and unintentional confirmation, in a minute particular, of the historic accuracy of the Acts, that Lydia, a purple-seller of Thyatira, is met in the Macedonian city of Philippi (Acts xvi. 14), this being precisely what was likely to happen from the close and frequent intercourse maintained between a mother city and its daughter colonies. From this Lydia, whose heart the Lord had opened to attend to the things spoken of Paul (Acts xvi. 14), the Church at Thyatira may have taken its beginnings. She who had gone forth for a while, to buy and sell and get gain, when she returned home may have brought back with her far richer merchandise than any she had looked to obtain.

‘*These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes*

like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. The attributes which the Lord claims are again drawn from the description of the first chapter, ver. 14, 15, which see. The title '*Son of God*' (cf. xix. 13) is not indeed expressly and in so many words there; but it is involved in, and is the sum total of the impression left by, the whole description. The actual form of this title is here drawn from the second Psalm, ver. 9; as is plain from more than one reference to that Psalm before this Epistle is ended; thus compare ver. 26 with Ps. ii. 8; and ver. 27 with ii. 9. He who will presently give dominion to his servants, first claims this dominion for Himself. The heathen have been given to Him for an inheritance, else He could not give them to his servants. If these servants of his are to rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel, it is only as partakers in a power which He has Himself first received.

Ver. 19. '*I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*'—Omit '*and thy works*' on its second occurrence, which has no right to a place in the text, and which mars the symmetry of all. We shall then have two pairs. First, '*thy charity and thy service*,' for the article prefixed to all these words shows that the concluding *σοῦ* belongs to them all,—the '*charity*,' or love, being the more inward thing, the '*service*' (*διακονία*) the outward ministrations, the helps of all kinds shown first to the household of faith, and then to all others, in which this '*charity*' found its utterance (Acts xi. 29; 1 Cor. xvi. 15; Heb. vi. 10). As the first pair have a very close inner connexion, so have also the next pair, '*and thy faith and thy patience.*' It needs but to refer in proof to Heb. xi. 27: 'He endured, as seeing Him that is invisible;'

and indeed Scripture everywhere declares that faith is the root and source of all patient continuance in well-doing.—‘*And the last to be more than the first.*’ The faithful in Thyatira were growing and increasing in this service of love, this patience of faith; herein satisfying the desire of Him, who evermore desires for his people that they should abound more and more in all good things. How much better this τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων than that of which St. Peter elsewhere speaks as the state of some, τὰ ἔσχατα χείρονα τῶν πρώτων (2 Pet. ii. 20; cf. Matt. xii. 45), which, as regarded the most excellent grace of all, the Lord has just declared to be the condition of the Ephesian Church (ver. 4).

Ver. 20. ‘*Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*’—Omit ‘*a few things*’ (ὀλίγα), which has no business in the text, having been brought here from ver. 14; and change, as a consequence of this, ‘*because*’ into ‘*that*’—but do not change ‘*that woman*’ into ‘*thy wife,*’ the authority for the insertion of σοῦ after τὴν γυναῖκα being insufficient to justify this; however there may be ‘many authorities, and some ancient, in its favour’ (R. V.) see Lee, *On the Revelation*, pp. 527, 535. How many of the early heretical leaders led about with them one who was neither a wife nor a sister is sufficiently known to all, as a ‘Simon Magus his Helena,’ that we speak not of others. The whole condition of things at Thyatira was exactly the reverse of the condition at Ephesus. There much zeal for the maintenance of sound doctrine, a stiff orthodoxy, but little love, and as a consequence, no doubt, few ministrations of love. Here the activity of faith and love, but in-

sufficient zeal for the maintenance of godly discipline and doctrine, a patience of error even where there was not a participation in it. Each of these Churches was weak in that wherein the other was strong.

But whom shall we understand by ‘*that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess,*’ whom the Lord proceeds presently to threaten with so terrible a doom? It may be well here to consider first the position which the literal and historic Jezebel occupies in the history of the Church of the Old Testament. As Balaam, in the earlier history of the children of Israel, was the author of the great attempt to introduce heathenism with all its train of attendant impurities into the heart of the Church of God (Rev. ii. 14; Num. xxv.), so Jezebel in the later period of that same history. She was a daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon (1 Kin. xvi. 13). The identity of this Ethbaal and *Ειθώβαλος*, mentioned in a fragment of the *Tyrian Annals* of Menander, preserved by Josephus (*Con. Apion.* i. 18), is sufficiently made out, and is not, I believe, called in question by any. Of this Ethbaal we there learn that he was a priest of Astarte, and, by the murder of his predecessor Pheles, made his own way to the throne and kingdom. Jezebel, so swift to shed blood (1 Kin. xvii. 4; xix. 2; xxi. 10), is a worthy offshoot of this evil stock. Nor less does she attest herself the daughter of the priest of Astarte. Hitherto the worship of the Calves had been the whole extent of the departure of the Ten Tribes from the Levitical institutions,—the true God worshipped still, although under symbols which He had expressly forbidden; the law of Moses in the main allowed and kept, however there might be a certain amount of sinful will-worship mingling with and infecting all. But from the time of Ahab’s marriage with the daughter of Ethbaal the apo-

stasy of Israel assumes altogether a different character ; the guilt of it is of quite another and an infinitely deadlier kind (1 Kin. xvi. 31 ; xxi. 25, 26). A fanatical promoter of the Baal worship (1 Kin. xviii. 19), overbearing with her stronger will the weak will of her despicable husband, having made her own the substance of a power whereof only the shadow remained to him (1 Kin. xxi. 7, 8), animated with the fiercest hatred against the prophets of Jehovah, the last witnesses for Him in Israel, now that the Levitical priesthood had been abolished there (1 Kin. xxi. 31), she seeks utterly to exterminate these (1 Kin. xviii. 13). She was probably herself, like her moral namesake here, a false prophetess ; a priestess of that foul enthusiasm. Many arguments make this probable at the least. As much seems implied in the answer to Joram's question, 'Is it peace?' which Jehu makes, 'What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and *her witchcrafts* are so many' (2 Kin. ix. 22)? So too, when we keep in mind the essentially impure character of the Phœnician idolatries which she introduced,—Ashtaroth or Astarte was the Phœnician Aphrodite,—we have an explanation of the 'whoredoms' which Jehu further lays to her charge, and which may thus have set a hideous contradiction between her and her name, if indeed that derivation which would make it etymologically to signify The Chaste (our *Agnes*) is the true one (see Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 37). Nor is this the only passage where these impurities are ascribed to her. There is at Jeremiah iv. 30 an allusion, often overlooked, but, so soon as attention is called to it, not to be gainsaid, to 2 Kin. ix. 30 ; and there the lovers or paramours of Jezebel appear.

Such was the elder Jezebel ; the female Antichrist of

the Old Testament. And the later, assuredly not a sect of evil-workers personified, but some single wicked woman in the Church of Thyatira (Jablonski, *De Jezabele, Thyatire-norum pseudoprophetissâ*, *Opusc.* vol. iii. p. 225), inheriting from her this name of infamy in the Church of God, would seem to have followed hard in the steps of her Jewish prototype (for a like transfer of an evil name see Isai. i. 10; Ezek. xvi. 3). Witsius: ‘Facile ex hoc loco concluditur fuisse Thyatiræ principem aliquam atque illustrem fœminam, simulacricolam, veneficam, meretricem, geminam germanam antiquæ illius Jezebelis, hoc tamen instructiorem ad perniciem, quod hæc palam sese hostem ac persecutricem Ecclesiæ ostendebat, illa autem videri voluit prophetissa, raptus fatidicos mentiens, in Nicolaitarum ludo ad omnem nequitiam edocta.’ Not only did she give herself out for a prophetess, but in one sense, as I take it, was such,—no mere *teacher* of perverse things, employing her intellectual faculties in the service of Satan, and not of God; but claiming inspiration, and probably possessing it, wielding spiritual powers, only they were such as reached her from beneath, not such as descended on her from above; for as at this time miraculous gifts of grace and power were at work in the Church, so were also the devilish counterfeits of these. And thus, by aid of these, she seduced the servants of Christ ‘to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols;’ see ver. 14. To restrain ‘servants’ here to those who hold office in the Church is certainly a mistake. *Δοῦλος* may very well have this narrower meaning at i. 1; but that *δοῦλοι* includes the whole body of the faithful at vii. 3; xxii. 3, is evident. A comparison of this verse with ver. 14–16 leaves no doubt that the Jezebelites, and Balaamites, and Nicolaitans, with secondary differences

no doubt, were yet substantially the same;—all libertine sects, disclaiming the obligations of the moral law; all starting with a denial that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh, and that in the flesh therefore men were to be holy; all alike false spiritualists, whose highflying pretensions did not hinder them from ending in the foulest fleshly sins; being themselves rather the means of entangling men therein.

Ver. 21. ‘*And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*’—The fact that punishment does not at once overtake sinners is constantly misunderstood by them as an evidence that it never will overtake them (Eccl. viii. 11; Isai. xxvi. 10; Ps. xxvi. 11); that God does not see, or, seeing, does not care to avenge. Christ opens out here another aspect under which this delay in the divine-revenges may be regarded. The very time during which ungodly men are heaping up for themselves greater wrath against the day of wrath, was a time lent them for repentance (Rom. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9), if only they would have understood the object and the meaning of it.

Ver. 22. ‘*Behold, I will cast her into a bed,¹ and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.*’—These last words imply that even now the day of grace was not expired for these transgressors, however near at hand the close of it might be.

¹ A curious testimony to the entire disappearance of Greek, and of the power of appealing to Greek copies of Scripture, probably to the well-nigh total absence of such in Western Europe to appeal to, and the consequent exclusive dependence on the Vulgate, occurs here in the *Commentary* of Richard of St. Victor, one of the most learned men of perhaps the most learned monastic foundation in France. He observes that some copies of the Latin here read ‘lectum,’ some ‘luctum;’ discusses at length the several advantages and probabilities of the two readings, without one word implying the possibility of settling the question at once by a reference to the original.

‘*I will cast her into a bed;*’ there where she has sinned (cf. Isai. lvii. 7, 8) shall she also be punished (cf. 1 Kin. xxi. 19); the bed of sin shall be the bed of languishing, of sickness, and of death; cf. 1 Macc. i. 5 (ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν κοίτην = ‘he fell sick’); 1 Cor. xi. 30. The allusion which Vitranga traces here to the bed on which Ahab cast himself down ‘heavy and displeased’ (1 Kin. xxi. 4) is ingenious, but exceedingly far-fetched.

Ver. 23. ‘*And I will kill her children with death.*’—If her lovers, those ‘*that commit adultery with her*’ (ver. 22), can only mean the chief furtherers and abettors of those evil things (she may have seduced them to fleshly as well as spiritual wickedness), ‘*her children*’ must be rather the less prominent, less forward members of the same wicked confederacy, more the deceived while the others were the deceivers (Isai. lvii. 3), who yet should be involved with them in a common doom (Isai. ix. 16; xlvi. 9; Ezek. xxiii. 47). The words ‘*with death*’ must plainly be accepted as emphatic; some understand with pestilence and plague (see Jer. xxi. 7), relying mainly on Rev. vi. 8; where, however, θάνατος cannot be proved to mean this; a reference to 2 Sam. xxiv. 13, 15; Ezek. xiv. 19, 21; xxxiii. 27, LXX, would have been more to the point. Hengstenberg detects an allusion here to the death of the adulteress (Lev. xx. 10; Ezek. xvi. 38–41; cf. John viii. 5); but this can scarcely be; for it is the ‘*children*’ of the adulteress, not the adulteress herself, who are here threatened with death. Others find an allusion to the two sweeping catastrophes which overtook the priests and votaries of Baal at exactly that period of Jewish history to which the mention of Jezebel here points (1 Kin. xviii. 40; 2 Kin. x. 25);—but more probably the words contain nothing more than a general threat that their doom

should be a signal one, that they 'should 'die of grievous deaths' (Jer. xvi. 4), and not the common death of all men, nor be visited after the visitation of all men (Num. xvi. 29).

'*And all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts.*'—The judgment on this brood of transgressors shall be so open and manifest, their sin shall so plainly find them out, that, not the wicked, for God's judgments are far above out of their sight, but '*all the Churches,*' all who ponder these things and lay them to heart, shall confess that He who moves up and down in the midst of his Church, beholding the evil and the good, is a God of knowledge (see ii. 2), who is not mocked; '*which searcheth the reins and hearts*' (ταῖς ἐννοίαις ἐμβατεύων, as Olympiodorus explains it). '*The reins*' are probably regarded here as the seat of the passions (Delitzsch, *Psychologie*, p. 220), '*the heart*' of the affections; cf. Jer. xvii. 10; xx. 12; and Basil the Great, *Hom. in Ps. vii.* § 6. But this searching of the hearts and reins being, as it is, a prerogative of Deity (Mark ii. 8), God only knowing the thoughts of men (ὁ καρδιογνώστης Θεός, Acts xv. 8; i. 24; 1 Kin. viii. 39; 1 Chron. xxix. 17; Ezek. xi. 5), it is plain that Christ, challenging this power for Himself, is implicitly claiming to be God; even as others do the like for Him, when they make this claim on his behalf (Heb. iv. 12, 13).—Ἐρευνᾶν is used in this same sense of searching, Rom. viii. 27, and always expresses a *careful* investigation, a following up of tracks or indications as far as they will lead, as the dog the footprints of the chase, the miner the veins of the metal (Gen. xxxi. 35; 1 Kin. xx. 6; Prov. xx. 27; 1 Cor. ii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 11). Expressing, as the word does, this laborious and even painful investigation, leading step by

step to its result, as every other *discursive* act, can only *ἀνθρωποπαθῶς* be ascribed to God; to whom by absolute and immediate intuition all hearts at all times lie open and manifest; who needs not to search out, and in this way to find, that which He always knows. For *ἐρευνῶν* the Septuagint Translators prefer *ἐτάζων* (Ps. vii. 10; 1 Chron. xxix. 17; Ps. cxxxviii. 22; Jer. xvii. 10), which rests on a different image,¹ and does not occur in the New Testament; though *ἐξετάζειν* more than once (Matt. ii. 8; John xxi. 12).

‘*And I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*’—This promise, or this threat, for it may be either, is one which nowadays we too commonly keep in the background; but it is one which we should press on ourselves and on others with the same emphasis and iteration wherewith Christ and his Word presses it upon us all (Ps. lxii. 13; Matt. xvi. 27; Rom. ii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 17; 2 Cor. v. 10; Job xxxiv. 11; Eccles. xii. 14; Prov. xxiv. 12; Jer. xxxii. 19). It is one of the gravest mischiefs which Rome has bequeathed to us, that in a reaction and protest, itself absolutely necessary, against the false emphasis which she puts on works, unduly thrusting them in to share with Christ’s merits in our justification, we often shrink from placing upon them the true; being as they are, to speak with St. Bernard, the ‘*via regni,*’ however little they may be the ‘*causa regnandi;*’ though here too it must never be forgotten that it is only the good tree which brings forth good fruit; and that no tree is good until Christ has made it good.

¹ Basil the Great: Ἐτασμός κυρίως ἐστὶν ἢ μετὰ πασῶν βασάνων προσαγομένη ἔρευνα παρὰ τῶν κριτῶν τοῖς ἐξεταζομένοις, ἵνα οἱ κρύπτοντες παρ’ ἑαυτοῖς τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα, τῇ ἀνάγκῃ τῶν πόνων εἰς τὸ ἐμφανές καταστήσωσι τὸ λανθάνον.

Ver. 24. ‘*But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.*’—Leave out the *καί* with which the second clause in the sentence begins, and read, ‘*But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira, &c.*’ The Gnostics, starting probably from 1 Cor. ii. 10, were ever boasting their acquaintance with mysteries, the deep things of God; could speak much about the *βυθός*, ‘*vere cæcutientes, qui profunda Bythi adinvenisse se dicunt*’ (Irenæus; cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Valentin.* § 1). A question is often here raised, whether these evil-workers spoke of ‘*depths of Satan*’; or only of ‘*depths*,’ while ‘*of Satan*’ is a further characteristic of these ‘*depths*,’ added by the Lord Himself; who thus intimates with a severe irony what was the real character of those ‘*depths*’ into which they professed themselves to have entered, and into which they sought to guide others. In this last way the words are generally understood, the Lord declaring what, in his all-seeing eye, was the true nature of the *μεγαλοῤῥημοσύναι* (such Ignatius, *Ep. ad Ephes.* 10, calls them), the ‘*great swelling words of vanity*’ which these Gnostics vented; promising liberty to others, while they were themselves servants of corruption. I should be disposed, however, to think with Hengstenberg, that it was they themselves who talked of ‘*depths of Satan*,’—the position of *ὡς λέγουσι* seems to imply as much,—that in that fearful sophistry wherein they were such adepts, and whereby they sought to make a religion of every corrupt inclination of the natural mind, they talked much of ‘*depths of Satan*,’ which it was expedient for them to fathom. They taught, as we know, that it was a small thing for a man to despise pleasure and to show himself superior to it, while at the same

time he fled from it. The true, the glorious victory was, to remain superior to it even while tasting it to the full; to give the body to all the lusts of the flesh, and yet with all this to maintain the spirit in a region of its own, uninjured by them; and thus, as it were, to fight against pleasure with the arms of pleasure itself; to mock and defy Satan even in his own kingdom and domain. We have an anticipation of this sophistry of sin, with its flatteries at once of the pride and corruption of the human heart, in the well-known *mot* of Aristippus, the Cyrenaic philosopher, who being upbraided on the score of his relations with a Corinthian courtesan, defended himself with the reply, difficult adequately to render in English, "Ἐχω Λαίδα, οὐκ ἔχομαι ὑπ' αὐτῆς (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* ii. 20; Diogenes Laertius, ii. 8. 75). Here, however, were but the germs of that which in some of the Gnostics appears fully blown.

'For you,' says the Lord, 'who have not gone to this satanic school, who have been content with the simple knowledge of the good, and not thought it needful to know the evil as well, not good and evil, but only good, *I will put upon you none other burden.*' If it be asked, '*none other burden*' than what?—the answer no doubt is, none other than a continued abstinence from, and protest against, these abominations. It was the master-stroke of the antinomian Gnostics to exaggerate, to distort, to misapply, all which St. Paul had spoken about the freedom of the Christian man from the law. They were the ultra-Paulines, who caricatured his doctrine, till of God's truth they had made a devil's lie. St. Paul had said of the law that it was not the ground of the Christian man's justification (Romans, Galatians), nor yet the source of his holiness (Colossians): they made him to say that

it was not the rule of his life; as though the Apostle had rejected it altogether as a burden no longer to be borne by the redeemed. The Lord takes up this word ‘burden;’—‘I do lay on you a burden, but it is a burden which it is your blessedness to bear, and over and above which I will impose no other.’ Compare Matt. xi. 30, where, however, *φορτίον*, not *βάρος*, stands in the original, and Acts xv. 28, 29, where *βάρος* occurs in this very sense of abstinence from idol-meats and fornication; and where exactly in the same sense, and almost in the same words, the Apostles declare that they will lay on the faithful of the Gentiles ‘no greater burden than these necessary things.’ I cannot but think that Christ’s words here have direct reference to that solemn decree of the Church.

Ver. 25. ‘*But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*’—It is on this condition that He will impose on them no additional burden. What they have of sound doctrine, of holy living, this they must hold fast, must so grasp it that none shall wrest it from them, till the day when the Lord shall come, and bring this long and painful struggle for the maintenance of his truth to an end. Ever and ever in Scripture, not the day of death, but the day of the Lord Jesus, is put as the term of all conflict.

Ver. 26. ‘*And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.*’—On the nominative absolute here (*ὁ νικῶν . . . δώσω αὐτῷ*) and at iii. 12, 21, see Winer, *Gramm.* § 28. 3; and for other examples of the same, Ps. x. 4; Hos. xii. 7; Matt. x. 32; Acts vii. 40. By ‘*my works*’ we must understand ‘works which I have commanded, in which I find pleasure, which are the fruits of my Spirit;’ cf. John vi. 28, where ‘the works of God’ are to be understood in the same sense as ‘godly works.’ Here again that which

is praised, that which will be crowned, is the keeping of these his works ‘*unto the end* ;’ for Christ, the great *ἐπιστάτης* in the games, of which the Father is the *ἀγωνοθέτης*, and, still to keep the language of Tertullian (*ad Mart.* 3), the Holy Ghost the *ξυστάρχης*, eternal life the *βραβεῖον*, promises here this reward, not to him who enters the lists and endures for a time, but to him who, having begun well, continues striving lawfully to the last. ‘*To him will I give power over the nations.*’ The royalties of Christ shall by reflection and communication be the royalties also of his Church. They shall reign ; but only because Christ reigns, and because He is pleased to share his dignity with them (iii. 21 ; Rom. v. 17 ; 2 Tim. ii. 12). When we ask ourselves in what sense, at what time, and in what form this ‘*power over the nations*’ shall be the prerogative of the Church, we must find our answer in such passages as Rev. xx. 4 ; xxii. 5 ; 1 Cor. vi. 2 ; Dan. vii. 22, 27 ; Ps. cxlix. 6–9 ; and above all Matt. xix. 28 ; cf. also Wisd. iii. 8 ; Ecclus. iv. 15. For ‘*power*’ the R. V. has substituted ‘*authority*,’ which is an improvement. There is very commonly a *moral* element implied in *ἐξουσία* (Matt. xxi. 23 ; Mark i. 22 ; John xvii. 2), which in *δύναμις* would be looked for in vain.

Ver. 27. ‘*And he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.*’—As this is a dignity which is originally Christ’s (Ps. ii. 9 ; cx. 2 ; Rev. xii. 5 ; xix. 15), and only by Him made over to his servants, it is needful first to inquire what it means in respect of Him ; and we may then understand what it means in respect of them. The passage in the second Psalm is no doubt that on which the three in this Book ultimately rest. It is there, ‘*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ;*’ but this Book of Revelation is in agree-

ment with the Septuagint, 'Thou shalt *rule* [ποιμανεῖς] them with a rod of iron.' The Hebrew word for 'Thou shalt *break*,' and that for 'Thou shalt *rule*,' only differ in their vowels; their consonants are identical; at the same time the parallelism of the latter half of the verse, 'Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel,' leaves no doubt that 'Thou shalt break' was the intention of the Psalmist. Shall we therefore conclude not merely that the Septuagint Translators mistook, which happens too frequently to be a matter to us of any serious wonder, but that the Lord set his seal to their error? By no means. He indeed accepts the pregnant and significant variation which they, intentionally or unintentionally, drew out of the language before them; and which was justified by the root common to both words; and instead of the mere unmingled judgment which lay in the passage as it originally stood in that Psalm, He expresses by it now judgment mingled with mercy, judgment behind which purposes of grace are concealed, and only waiting their due time to appear. Such a παιδευτικὴ ἐνέργεια, as Theodoret terms it, must be recognized in the ποιμαίνειν; which our 'Thou shalt *rule*,' and the Latin 'reges,' only imperfectly give back; as, in regard of the Latin, Hilary (*in Ps. ii.*) urged long ago: 'Reges eos in virgâ ferreâ; quanquam ipsum *reges* non tyrannicum neque injustum sit, sed ex æquitatis ac moderationis arbitrio regimen rationale demonstrat, tamen molliorem adhuc regentis affectum proprietas Græca significat. Quod enim nobiscum est, *reges eos*, cum illis est *ποιμανεῖς αὐτούς*, id est, *pastoraliter* reges, regendi scilicet eos curam affectu pastoris habiturus.' For a still tenderer use of ποιμαίνειν see John xxi. 16; Acts xx. 28. No doubt the words do contain a threat for the nations; but it is a threat of love (cf. I Cor. iv. 21).

Christ shall rule them with a sceptre of iron, so to make them capable of being ruled with a sceptre of gold; severity first, that grace may come after; they are broken in pieces, that they may know themselves to be but men; that, their fierceness and pride being brought down, they may accept the yoke of Christ (Ps. lxxxiii. 16). And indeed how often the great tribulations of a people have been the *προπαιδεία*, the preparatory discipline, stern but indispensable, whereby the Son of God has broken their pride, and made them capable of receiving his gospel, which, but for these, they would in their presumption and self-confidence have rejected to the end. Thus what a ruling with a rod of iron was the enforced conversion of the Saxons by Charlemagne; what a bruising and breaking of their pride and self-confidence, while yet it was the beginning for them of a higher life, which except for this they might have never known.

Our Translators have only rendered *ράβδος* by 'sceptre' on a single occasion in the New Testament (Heb. i. 8). It were to be wished they had done so here, and at xii. 5; xix. 15. The word in the second Psalm *טַבַּרְבָּר* has this meaning; cf. Ps. xlv. 8, where in like manner it occurs; and everything else speaking of royalty here, this should do the same. It may be urged, indeed, that royal sceptres are not usually of iron, but of wood overgilded, or of silver, or of gold. This may be quite true, but only makes more striking the exception in the present instance. '*He shall rule them with a sceptre of iron,*' which, harder and stronger than any other, shall dash them who oppose themselves to it in pieces like a potter's vessel; this image implying the ease with which all resistance shall be overcome, the utter destruction which shall overtake all them who attempt it (Jer. xix. 11; Isai. xxx. 14). Ewald:

‘Imago regis hostes suos facillimâ operâ conterentis et dispergentis.’

‘*Even as I received of my Father.*’—There was one who offered to inaugurate Him at once in the possession of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and the Lord had repelled him and his offer with indignation (Luke iv. 5-8), not because these were not his just expectation and his due inheritance; but because He would receive them at no other hands than his Father’s. And now we find that He *has* received them at these hands, and they are his; his to impart to his servants; and that which was a lying boast on the lips of the usurper, namely, that he could give them to whom he would, is a truth on the lips of the rightful Lord. Even while upon earth He could say to his own, in prophetic anticipation of his completed work (and the words constitute a very remarkable parallel to these), ‘I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto Me’ (Luke xxii. 29). Richard of St. Victor: ‘Magna promissio, magnum donum: hoc promittit, hoc tribuit, quod Ipse accepit.’

Ver. 28. ‘*And I will give him the morning star.*’—Cf. xxii. 16, where the Lord Himself is ‘the bright and morning star’ (ὁ ἀστήρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός); and the glorious hymn in the *Ranæ* of Aristophanes (343) where Dionysus is described as νυκτέρου τελετής φωσφόρος ἀστήρ. Whether He is meant by ‘the day-star’ (φωσφόρος) of 2 Pet. i. 19, may be a question. This star, as light-bringer, herald and harbinger of day, goes by many names; it is ἀστήρ ἑωθινός (Ecclus. i. 6), ὁ ἑωσφόρος ὁ πρωτὶ ἀνατέλλων (Isai. xiv. 12, ‘Lucifer, son of the morning,’ A. V.); the beauty and transcendent brightness of it being continually celebrated by poets, as by Homer (*Il.* xxii. 317: ἔσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσταιται

ἀστήρ); by Virgil (*Æn.* viii. 389); by Ovid (*Trist.* i. 3. 71: 'cælo nitidissimus alto'); and by Milton (*Par. Lost*, iv. 605:

'Hesperus, that led
The starry host, *rode brightest*').

Thus does He who is 'fairer than the children of men' claim all that is fairest and loveliest in creation as the faint shadow and image of his perfections. A comparison with that other passage in this Book referred to already (xxii. 16) conclusively proves that when Christ promises that He will give to his faithful ones the morning star, He promises that He will give to them Himself, that He will impart to them his own glory and a share in his own royal dominion (cf. iii. 21); for the star, as there has been already occasion to observe, is evermore the symbol of royalty (Matt. ii. 2), being therefore linked with the sceptre (Num. xxiv. 17). All the glory of the world shall end in being the glory of the Church, if only this abide faithful to its Lord. Witsius very beautifully, though placing his emphasis not precisely as I have done: 'Stellæ matutinæ datio significat, I. communionem arctiorem cum Christo, penes quem fons lucis est (Ps. xxxvi. 10), et qui se ipsum stellam illam matutinam et splendidam nuncupat (Rev. xxii. 16). II. Quod exinde consequitur lucis et cognitionis spiritualis incrementum, immo consummationem sapientiæ cælestis (cf. 2 Pet. i. 19). III. Gaudium gloriosum et ineffabile, quod frequenter luci comparatur (Esth. viii. 16; Job xxx. 26; Ps. xvii. 11), et imprimis luci matutinæ, quæ quum caliginosæ noctis horrore proxime succedat, omnium est gratissima (Job ii. 17; 2 Sam. xxiii. 4; Jes. viii. 20).'

Ver. 29. 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.'—Compare ii. 7.

V.

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS.

REV. iii. 1-6.

Ver. 1. 'And unto the Angel of the Church in Sardis write.'—Sardis, now Sart, was situated on the side of Mount Tmolus, upon the river Pactolus. The ancient capital of Lydia ('Cræsi regia Sardis,' Horace, *Ep.* i. 11. 2), it maintained a certain portion of its old dignity and splendour in the time of the Persians, being the residence of the Satrap, and had not wholly lost it in the Roman period. For the things in which the Sardians gloried the most, see Tacitus, *Annal.* iv. 55. Melito, whose name we hear seldom now, but the titles of whose works, one of these being a *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, inspire us with a lively regret for their almost entire loss, was bishop of Sardis in the latter half of the second century, being the only illustrious name connected with this Church (Routh, *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, vol. i. p. 109 sqq.; Neander, *Kirch. Gesch.* i. 3, p. 1140; *Theol. Stud. und Krit.* 1838, p. 54; Renan, *Mare-Aurèle*, pp. 178-191). Renan only needed a little more material to work on to have made a most interesting sketch of Melito's life and work; but his materials are *too* scanty, and even his ingenuity fails him here.

‘*These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.*’—There has been already occasion (i. 4) to speak of ‘*the seven Spirits of God,*’ and to claim for these that they in this complex can set forth no other than the one Holy Spirit, the third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, in his sevenfold operation. Augustine (*In Joan. Tract.* 122) speaks confidently on this matter: ‘*Quid in Apocalypsi, nonne septem spiritus Dei dicuntur, cum sit unus atque idem Spiritus, dividens propria unicuique prout vult? Sed operatio septenaria unius Spiritus sic appellata est ab eodem Spiritu, qui scribenti adfuit, ut septem spiritus dicerentur.*’ It only remains to consider the relation in which Christ, declaring that it is He ‘*that hath the seven Spirits of God,*’ claims to stand to these seven. How entirely He ‘*hath*’ them, by how intimate a right they are his, may best be understood by the comparison of other words, presently occurring in this same Book: ‘*I beheld a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth*’ (v. 6; cf. Zech. iii. 9; iv. 10). It needs hardly to be observed how important a witness this verse, when the right interpretation of ‘*the seven Spirits*’ has been seized, bears to the faith of the Western Church on that great point upon which it is at issue with the Eastern, in respect, namely, of the procession of the Holy Ghost. He is indeed the Spirit of the Father *and the Son*. The Son ‘*hath the seven Spirits,*’ or the Spirit; not because He has received; for though it is quite true that in the days of his flesh He did receive (Matt. iii. 16; John iii. 34; Heb. i. 9), yet now it is the Son of God, a giver therefore, and not a receiver, who is speaking; who ‘*hath*’ the Spirit; ‘*hath*’ to the end that He may impart it. If, too, the Spirit be admitted to be

God, then the Son, who ‘*hath*’ the Spirit, must be God likewise ; as is well argued, though not with reference to this particular verse, by Augustine (*De Trin.* xv. 26) : ‘*Quomodo Deus non est, qui dat Spiritum Sanctum? Immo quantus Deus est, qui dat Deum?*’ There is a special fitness in the assumption of this style by the Lord in his address to the Angel of the Church of Sardis. To him and to his people, sunken in spiritual deadness and torpor, the lamp of faith waning and almost extinguished in their hearts, the Lord presents Himself as having the fulness of all spiritual gifts ; able therefore to revive, able to recover, able to bring back from the very gates of spiritual death those who would employ the little last remaining strength which they still retained, in calling, even when thus *in extremis*, upon Him.

In the words which follow, ‘*and the seven stars,*’ is the only approach to a repetition in the titles of the Lord throughout all the Epistles. He has already proclaimed Himself as ‘*He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand*’ (ii. 1), and now He is ‘*He that hath the seven stars.*’ But the repetition is only apparent. ‘*The seven stars*’ are brought into entirely different combinations there and here. There ‘*He that holdeth the seven stars*’ is set forth as the same ‘*who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ;*’ here ‘*He that hath the seven Spirits of God*’ hath also ‘*the seven stars.*’ But since ‘*the stars are the Angels of the seven Churches*’ (i. 20), we must see in this combination a hint of the relation between Christ, as the giver of the Holy Spirit, and as the author of a ministry of living men in his Church ; this ministry of theirs resting wholly on these gifts, even as the connexion between the two is often brought out in the New Testament. The *locus classicus* on this matter is

Ephes. iv. 7-12; but see further John xx. 22, 23; Acts i. 8; xx. 28. His are the golden urns from which these 'stars,' if they would at all shine, must continually draw their light. They need not fear to be left destitute of his manifold gifts, for He hath the Holy Spirit in all his sevenfold operations, wherewith evermore to furnish them to the full. With a deep insight into this truth the Church orders that hymn, 'Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,' to be sung at the ordination of her ministers. Cocceius: 'Per hanc descriptionem Christus vult se nosci caput Ecclesiæ, suppeditatorem Spiritûs Sancti, et datorem Ministrorum.'

'I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.'—A passage which at once suggests itself as parallel to this, is 1 Tim. v. 6, where St. Paul, of a woman living in pleasure, says, ζῶσα τέθνηκε: and compare, in the same sense, Matt. viii. 22; Luke xv. 24; Rom. vi. 13; Ephes. ii. 1, 5; Heb. vi. 1; ix. 14. Bengel suggests, and earlier commentators had anticipated the suggestion, that the name of this Angel may have contained some assertion of *life*; which stood in lamentable contradiction with the realities of *death* which the Lord beheld in him; a name therefore which in his case was not the utterance of a truth, but a lie; no *nomen et omen*, but the reverse; the name affirming and implying that he was alive, while in truth he was dead; Ζώσιμος would be such a name in Greek, Vitalis in Latin. Hengstenberg considers the suggestion not improbable; Marekius brands it as 'inanissima conjectura;' even as it appears to me exceedingly improbable and far-fetched. The use of 'name' as equivalent to fame, reputation, character, is as common in Greek as in English. The fact that Sardis should have had this name and fame of life is very start-

ling, and may well summon each and all to an earnest heart-searching. There would be nothing nearly so startling, if Sardis had been counted by the Churches round about as a Church fallen into lethargy and hastening to decay and death. But there is no appearance of the kind. Laodicea, we know, deceived herself (iii. 17), but nothing implies that she deceived others; counted herself rich, when she *was* most poor; but there is no hint to make us think that others counted her rich as well; but Sardis had a name that she lived, was well spoken of, regarded, we may well believe, as a model Church, can therefore have been by no means wanting in the outer manifestations of spiritual life; while yet all these shows of life did but conceal the realities of death; so He, before whose eyes of fire no falsehood can stand, too surely saw.

Ver. 2. *‘Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.’*—Translate rather, *‘Become watchful,’* or, if this be not too familiar, *‘wake up’* (γίνου γρηγορῶν). The passages are many in which activity or vigilance of spirit is set forth under this same image, often by this very word (Matt. xxiv. 42, 43; xxv. 13; xxvi. 41; Mark xiii. 37; Acts xx. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 34; xvi. 13; 1 Thess. v. 6; 1 Pet. v. 8; Rev. xvi. 15). Not a few of our commentators are agreed that τὰ λοιπά here should be rendered not *‘the things which remain’* (*‘quæ huc usque tibi mansere virtutes,’* Ewald); but rather, *‘those which remain,’* or *‘the rest’* (= τοὺς λοιπούς, or τοὺς καταλοίπους, Jer. xxiii. 3), as many as are not yet dead, however they may be now at the point of death. We gather from these words that, with few exceptions, the entire Sardian Church shared in this deadness of its chief pastor; while he, in seeking to revive their life, to chafe their dead limbs, would best revive and recover the warmth of his

own (Ps. li. 13). Their present abject and fallen condition is excellently expressed by the use of the neuter (cf. 1 Cor. i. 27; Ezek. xxxiv. 4; Zech. xi. 9); nor indeed need the use of it surprise us, even without the sufficient explanation which this supplies. It is not here only that *στηρίζειν* is employed in this sense of establishing, confirming in the grace of God (see Luke xxii. 32; Rom. i. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 3; 1 Pet. v. 10); *βεβαιούν* too often occurs in the same sense (1 Cor. i. 8; 2 Cor. i. 21; Col. ii. 7); *θεμελιοῦν* (Eph. iii. 17; Col. i. 23; 1 Pet. v. 10), and *ρίζουν* (Ephes. iii. 18; Col. ii. 7) as well. This command to the Sardinian Angel implies that the *νεκρὸς εἶ* of ver. 1 must not be taken in all its force. The dead can bury their dead, but this is all which such can do; they must be themselves alive, who are bidden to impart a savour of life to others. The fire of grace may burn very low in their hearts; but it cannot be quite extinguished; for how in that case could they kindle any flame in the hearts of others?

‘*For I have not found thy works perfect before God.*’—The word here employed is not that which we commonly render ‘*perfect*’; not *τέλεια*, but *πεπληρωμένα*; so that the Lord contemplates the works prepared and appointed in the providence of God for the faithful man to do as a definite sphere (Ephes. ii. 10), which it was his duty and his calling to have *fulfilled* or *filled to the full*,—the same image habitually underlying the uses of *πληροῦν* and *πληροῦσθαι* (Matt. iii. 15; Rom. xiii. 8). This sphere of appointed duties the Sardinian Angel had not fulfilled; not, at least, ‘*before God*’; for on these last words the emphasis must be laid. Before himself and fellow men his works may very likely have been ‘*perfect*’; indeed, we are expressly told that he had ‘*a name to live*’ (ver. 1); for we

all very easily satisfy ourselves concerning our own works, neither is it very difficult to satisfy the world concerning them. But to have our works '*perfect before God,*' to fill up the measure of those that He has ordained, so to have them *πεπληρωμένα*, that is quite a different and a far harder thing. Very striking and very searching words on this matter are those of one whose own devotion to his work gave him a right to speak—Juan d'Avila, the apostle of Andalusia: 'Tot tantæque sunt pastorum obligationes, ut qui vel tertiam earum partem reipsâ impleret, sanctus ab hominibus haberetur; cum tamen eo solo contentus, gehennam non esset evasurus;' and few, who have read, will forget some words of Cecil very nearly to the same effect—for holy men have in their holiness a marvellous bond of union, when everything else seems to separate them,—that a minister of Christ is very often in highest honour with men for the performance of one half of his work, while God is regarding him with displeasure for the neglect of the other half.

It is a very instructive fact, that everywhere else, in the Epistles to all the Churches save only to this and to Laodicea, there is mention of some burden to be borne, of a conflict either with foes within the Church or without, or with both. Only in these two nothing of the kind occurs. The exceptions are very significant. There is no need to assume that the Church at Sardis had openly coalesced and joined hands with the heathen world; this would in those days have been impossible; nor yet that it had renounced the *appearance* of opposition to the world. But the two tacitly understood one another. This Church had nothing of the spirit of the Two Witnesses, of whom we read that they '*tormented* them that dwelt on the earth' (Rev. xi. 10), tormented them, that is, by their witness

for a God of truth and holiness and love, whom the dwellers on the earth were determined not to know. There was nothing in it to provoke from the heathen, in the midst of whom it sojourned, any such words as those which the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* puts into the mouth of the ungodly men (ii. 12-16). The world could endure it, because it too was a world. On the not less significant absence of all heretical perversions of the truth in these Churches, there will be something to say when we have reached the Epistle to Laodicea.

Ver. 3. ‘Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.’—This ‘how’ is by some interpreters referred to the *manner* of their former receiving, and by some to the *matter* which they formerly received and heard. Now if the character of the charge which the Lord is making against Sardis were that of holding, or even tolerating, any erroneous doctrine, contrary to ‘the faith once delivered to the saints,’ I should certainly side with them who referred this ‘how’ to the *matter*, to the form of sound words which they had accepted at the first, and to which Christ would recall them now; I should see in these words a parallel to such passages as Col. ii. 6; 1 Tim. vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 14. But the charge against Sardis is not a perverse holding of untruth, but a heartless holding of the truth; and therefore I cannot but think that the Lord is graciously reminding her of the heartiness, the zeal, the love with which she received this truth at the first. Then, no doubt, there was great joy in that city (Acts viii. 8); but now all was changed; compare St. Paul’s words, 1 Thess. i. 5-10, where, however, there is no such painful comparison to draw between the present and the past of his Thessalonian converts; also the same Apostle to the Galatians (iv. 13-15), a completer

parallel to the words before us, seems that St. Paul is contrasting there their present disaffection and coldness of heart toward him and the Gospel of the grace of God which he brought, with the zeal and warmth and love wherewith they first received these glad tidings at his lips, the 'how' of their present holding with the 'how' of their past receiving. But this '*how thou hast received*' refers to something more, besides *their* joyful loving acceptance of the truth in times past. They are bidden, no doubt, in these words to remember as well '*how*' that truth itself came, that they *might* receive it; with what demonstration of the Spirit and of power from the lips of those ambassadors of Christ, whoever they may have been, who first brought it to Sardis; how holily, how unblamably these went in and out among them. And remembering all this, let them not guiltily suffer that to go, which came so commended to them, which was so joyfully embraced by them, but rather hold it with a firm grasp. 'Prize now'—this is what the warning word of a gracious Lord would say—'that which thou didst once prize at so high a rate, which came to thee so evidently as a gift from God, accompanied with the Holy Ghost from heaven; and repent thee of all the coldness and heartlessness wherewith thou hast come to regard it' (2 Pet. i. 9).

'*If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*'—Augustine has pointedly said, '*Latet ultimus dies, ut observetur omnis dies.*' But should this Angel refuse thus to observe and watch, the Lord takes up against him and repeats here his own words, twice spoken, with slight variations, in the days of his ministry on earth (Matt. xxiv. 42, 43; Luke xii. 39, 40); words which must have profoundly impressed themselves on those who heard

them, and on the early Church in general, as is evidenced from the frequent reference to them in other parts of the New Testament; as by St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 2, 4); by St. Peter (2 Ep. iii. 10); and by St. John (Rev. xvi. 15). It is the *stealthiness* of Christ's advent, and thus his coming upon the secure sinner when least He is looked for, which is the point of the comparison, not the violent taking away of the worldling's goods. In that case, He would be the *ληστής* rather than the *κλέπτης*, the robber, and not the thief which here He is (cf. Matt. xxiv. 36-51; xxv. 13). That grand ancient proverb, which ascribed to the avenging deities feet shod with wool, 'Dii laneos habent pedes,' awfully expressed the sense which the heathen had of this noiseless approach of the divine judgments, of Justice (*ὀπισθόπους Δίκη*, as one called her of old), oftentimes so near at the very moment when thought so remote. So too in that sublime fragment of some Greek tragic poet, the very turn of the phrase in the conclusion reminds one of these words of Christ:

δοκéis τὰ θεῶν σὺ ξυνετὰ νικῆσαι ποτε,
καὶ τὴν Δίκην που μάκρ' ἀποκίσθαι βροτῶν;
ἢ δ' ἐγγύς ἐστιν, οὐχ ὀρωμένη δ' ὄρα,
ὄν χρὴ κολάζειν τ', οἶδεν· ἀλλ' οὐκ οἶσθα σὺ
ὀπότεν ἄφνω μολοῦσα διολέση κακοῦς.

Ver. 4. 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.'—'But' (*ἀλλά*), with which this verse begins, and about whose right to a place in the text there is not a question, has been carelessly omitted here by our Authorized translators. 'Names' cannot here be slightly used, any more than at Acts i. 15; cf. Rev. xi. 13; Num. i. 2, 18, 20; iii. 40, 43; xxvi. 53; it must be simply equivalent to persons;—or there may be a tacit reference to ver. 1. The Angel of Sardis had a 'name'

that he lived, and was dead; but there were some there, however few, whose 'names' were more than names; who had not merely the *form* of godliness (2 Tim. iii. 5; *μόρφωσις* there = *ὄνομα* here), but the *power*. It is very beautiful to observe the gracious manner in which the Lord recognizes and sets his seal of allowance to the good which anywhere He finds. Abraham said, 'to slay the righteous with the wicked, that be far from Thee' (Gen. xviii. 25); but it is far from Him no less even to seem to include the righteous and the wicked in a common blame. He, the same who delivered Noah, a preacher of righteousness, from the destruction of the old world, who drew just Lot out of Sodom, who could single out from the whole wicked family of Jeroboam, and take from the evil to come, Abijah, 'because in him there was found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel' (1 Kin. xiv. 13), beholds the few faithful in Sardis that had not defiled their garments, will not suffer them to suppose that they are overlooked by Him, or that his condemnation was intended to include them. The '*garments*' which these are thus declared not to have '*defiled*,' are not to be identified with the '*white raiment*' of the next verse, nor with the '*white*' in the next clause of this. The '*white raiment*' there is the garment of *glory*,—this the garment of *grace*; that incapable of receiving a stain, being part of an inheritance which in all its parts is *ἀμίαντος* (1 Pet. i. 4); this one which *σπίλοι* (Ephes. v. 27; Jam. iii. 6), *μιάσματα* (2 Pet. ii. 20), *μολυσμοί* (2 Cor. vii. 1), can only too easily deform; that keeping itself, for nothing that defileth enters where it is worn (Rev. xxi. 27); this needing to be kept above all keeping (Rev. xvi. 15), if the glory and brightness are not quite to depart from it. This, itself a wedding garment (Matt. xxii. 11, 12), but not *necessarily* identical with

‘the fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of saints’ (Rev. xix. 8), is put on at our entrance by baptism into the kingdom of grace; that at our entrance by the resurrection, if not before, into the kingdom of glory.

There were those at Sardis, a little remnant, who had thus kept their garments; or, according to his testimony ‘who seeth in secret,’ had ‘*not defiled*’ them. Absolutely, and in the highest sense, no one has thus kept his garments, save only He who received more than a garment of grace at baptism; having been sanctified in his mother’s womb, and thus a ‘holy thing’ (Luke i. 35), not from his birth only, but from his conception. Yet, in a secondary sense, and as compared with too many, there are those who have not defiled these garments; or, in the equivalent language of St. James, ‘kept themselves unspotted from the world’ (i. 27). These are they who, if they do contract any defilement upon these, yet suffer it not to harden or become ingrained in their garments; but go at once to the fountain open for all uncleanness, wash those garments and make them white again in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. vii. 14).—*Μολύνειν* differs from *μιαίνειν*, as ‘inquinare’ from ‘maculare’ (see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 31), being not so much to stain with colour as to besmear or besmirch with filth (Cant. v. 3; Gen. xxxvii. 30). Hengstenberg is convinced we are to find in this *μιαίνειν* (= ‘sordidare’), a covert allusion to the name of this city, Sardis or Sardes, which is so near to *sordes*; Christ saying that, with the few exceptions which He has made, Sardes is become *sordes* (‘*Sardes ist sordes geworden*’). But a *Latin* pun, and such a wretched one, in the Apocalypse! A Hebrew, or even a Greek, play on words, is quite conceivable there. Such an one lies in the name ‘Nicolaitans,’ given to the libertines of the

apostolic period (see ii. 6). A deep sense of the significance of words and names will often find its utterance in such; but a Latin pun, and that with no slightest hint to set any looking for it, is about the unlikeliest thing in the world to encounter there. Not a few expositors, bringing this passage into connexion with Jude 23, find reference in both to those ceremonial uncleannesses spoken of in Lev. xv. and elsewhere, which so very easily may be moral uncleannesses as well. I do not think this to lie in the words; but that *every* defilement (*μολυσμός*) of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. vii. 1) is here intended.

‘*And they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.*’—Here are many promises in one. The promise of life, for only the quick or living walk, the dead are still; of liberty, for the free walk, and not the fast bound; of beauty, for the grace and dignity of long garments only appears to the full, when the wearer of them is in motion; therefore is it that ‘the Scribes *desire to walk* in long robes’ (Luke xx. 46). And all this has its corresponding truth in the kingdom of heaven. God’s saints and servants here in this world of grace, and no doubt also in that world of glory, are best seen, and most to be admired, when they are engaged in active services of love. And such they shall have. They shall walk (cf. Zech. iii. 7) with their Lord, shall be glorified together with Him (Rom. viii. 17; John xvii. 24); his servants shall serve Him (Rev. xxii. 3). And why? ‘*for they are worthy.*’ God does not refuse to ascribe a *worthiness* to men (Matt. x. 10, 11; xxii. 8; Luke xx. 35; xxi. 36; 2 Thess. i. 5, 11; Wisd. iii. 5); although this worthiness must ever be contemplated as *relative*, and not *absolute*; as resting on God’s free acceptance of an obedience which would fain be perfect, even while it actually *is* most imperfect, and on

this his acceptance and allowance of it alone. There are those who ‘*are worthy*’ according to the rules which free grace *has* laid down, although there are none worthy according to those conditions which strict justice *might* have laid down; and God is ‘faithful’ (1 John i. 9), in that having set forth these conditions of grace, He will observe and abide by them. Vitringa well: ‘Dignitas hinc notat proportionem et congruentiam, quæ erat inter statum gratiæ quo fuerant in his terris, et gloriæ quam Dominus ipsis decreverat, *æstimandam ex ipsâ lege gratiæ.*’ Compare Bishop Bull’s Sermon, *The worthiness of the partakers of future glory* (Works, vol. i. p. 216). There is another very fearful ‘they are worthy’ in this Book (xvi. 6), where no such observation would need to be made, where no such mitigation of the word’s force would be required; for see the antithesis between death as the wages (ὄψώνια) of sin, and eternal life as the gift (χάρισμα) of God, Rom. vi. 23.

Ver. 5. ‘*He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.*’—A repetition of the promise of the verse preceding. They who have kept their garments here, as a few in Sardis to whom the Lord bears testimony (ver. 4) had done, shall have brighter garments given to them there, ‘*vestes vitæ,*’ as in the book of Enoch they are called. Of white as the colour of heaven, and of *white* garments as *shining* garments of glory, there has been already occasion to speak; see on ii. 17. Add the words of Grotius: ‘λευκὰ ἱμάτια, hoc loco et infra, iii. 18; iv. 4, sunt vestes *coruscantes*, et sic sume στολὰς λευκάς, infra, vi. 11; vii. 9, 13.’ It is not in Scripture merely that white is thus presented as the colour of heaven, and white garments the suitable investiture of the blessed inhabitants of heaven. The same,

out of a deep inborn symbolism, repeats itself in heathen antiquity as well; thus see Plato, *Legg.* xii. 956; Cicero, *Legg.* ii. 18; Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 665; Ovid, *Fast.* iii. 363; iv. 419, 420; *Metam.* x. 432. As 'raiment' in the literal sense of the word is inconceivable in heaven, we must understand by it here, that clothing with light *as with a garment*, which shall be theirs who shall then 'shine out (*ἐκλάμψουσι*, Matt. xiii. 43; cf. Dan. xii. 3) as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;' this vesture of light being indeed their raiment, and yet for all this not something external to them, but the expression outwardly of all which now inwardly they are. The glorified body, defecated of all its dregs and impurities, whatever remained of these having been *precipitated* in death, and now a body transformed and transfigured into the likeness of Christ's body (Phil. iii. 21), this *σῶμα ἐπουράνιον*, as contrasted with the *σῶμα ἐπίγειον* and *χοϊκόν* which we now wear (1 Cor. xv. 40, 47), with its robe, atmosphere, and effluence of light, is itself, I believe, the 'white raiment' which Christ here promises to his redeemed. There are some beautiful observations on this matter in Delitzsch, *Bibl. Psychologie*, p. 374.

I have noted already (see ii. 10) the frequency, as it appears to me, of the scoffing side-glances at Scripture which occur in the writings of Lucian. It would be curious to know whether he intended a mock at this glorious hope of the Christian, when, relating the tales current about Peregrinus, and the fiery passage of this charlatan in the fashion of Empedocles to a mock immortality, he makes one of this impostor's followers assure his hearers that shortly after the disappearance of Peregrinus in his funeral pile, he beheld him *walking in a white garment, shining*, and crowned with a garland of olive (*ἐν λευκῇ ἐσθῆτι*

περιπατοῦντα, φαιδρόν, κοτίνῳ τε ἐστεμμένον, *De Mort. Pereg.* 40). The coincidence of one or two such passages we might attribute to accident; but they recur too often for any such explanation. See a very good article by Planck, *Lucian und das Christenthum*, in the *Theol. Stud. und Krit.* 1851, pp. 826–902; where also there are references to some earlier essays on the same subject.

‘*And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.*’—It is much more than a simple negative; οὐ μὴ ἐξαλειψῶ = ‘*nequaquam delebo.*’ Our Translators have elsewhere given to this οὐ μὴ its full force; thus John vi. 37 (‘in no wise’); viii. 51; xiii. 8 (‘never’); but this only too rarely; for see Luke xxi. 33; Rev. ii. 11. We read of a ‘*book of life,*’ Exod. xxxii. 32, 33; Ps. lxix. 29; Dan. xii. 1; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. xiii. 8; xx. 15; xxi. 27; of those ‘*written among the living*’ (γραφέντες εἰς ζώην) of Isai. iv. 3; and resting on the same image, our Lord speaks of some whose names ‘*are written in heaven*’ (Luke x. 20; cf. Heb. xii. 23). These are the τεταγμένοι εἰς ζώην of Acts xiii. 48. Famous cities of this world, great Italian above all, Florence and Genoa for example, have had, or still may have, their ‘*book of gold*’ (*libro d’oro*), in which to be written has implied participation in all the privileges, rights, honours, and advantages which that city could confer; while to be blotted out from this book would mark a man as infamous, stript of all the honours and dignities which once he called his own. These at their best are but weak earthly copies of the glory or the shame which are the portion of those who bear themselves worthily or unworthily of that heavenly polity to which they have been called. The intimation here given that there are names, which, having been once written in that book, might yet be afterwards blotted out of it, has proved

not a little perplexing to followers of Augustine, who will not be content in this mystery of predestination with having *some* Scriptures on their side, and leaving the reconciliation of these and those others which are apparently contradictory to these, for another and a higher state of knowledge; but who would fain make it appear that *all* Scripture is with them (see Turretine, *De Libro Vitæ*, pp. 9-22). If this passage had stood by itself, it would not have been hard for them to answer, as indeed they *do* answer, that *all* who 'are written in the book of life' overcome; therefore that this promise holds good for them all, and none who are therein written have their names blotted out from this book. But, unfortunately, beside and behind this passage, there are others, not capable of this solution, and principally Exod. xxxii. 32; Ps. lxxix. 29; Rev. xxii. 19. How much violence they are obliged to use, before they can compel such Scriptures as these within the limits of their system, may be judged from Augustine's own comment on the second of them (*Enarr. in Ps. lxxix.*): 'Deleantur de libro viventium, et cum justis non scribantur, non sic accipere debemus quod quemquam Deus scribat in libro vitæ, et deleat illum: si homo dixit, Quod scripsi scripsi, Deus quemquam scribit et delet? . . . Isti ergo quomodo inde delentur, ubi nunquam scripti sunt? Hoc dictum est *secundum spem ipsorum, quia ibi se scriptos putabunt*. Quid sit, deleantur de libro vitæ? Et ipsis constet non illos ibi esse.' The warning is surely an instructive one, when so holy and truth-loving a man as Augustine can, in favour of a foregone conclusion, *thus* violently deal with a word of God's.

'But I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels.'—Christ had spoken when on earth of

confessing those who confessed Him, before his Father in heaven (Matt. x. 32, 33), and before the Angels (Luke xii. 8, 9). That 'in heaven' is of course omitted now, for there is no longer any contrast between the Father *in heaven* and the Son *on earth*; but the two confessions, which were separated before, appear united now; and in general we may observe of this Epistle that in great part it is woven together of sayings which the Lord had already uttered once or oftener in the days during which He pitched his tabernacle among men; He now setting his seal from heaven upon his words uttered on earth. On these costly mosaic-works of Scripture, which in our careless reading of it we so often overlook, there are some beautiful remarks in Delitzsch, *Commentar über den Psalter*, on Ps. cxxxv.; which Psalm is itself, as are also Psalms xevii. xeviii. notable examples of the skill of a divine Artificer herein.

Nor will it be inopportune to observe further what signal internal evidence this same fact, analysed a little closer, will supply on another point; upon this, namely, that these Epistles are what they profess themselves to be, namely Epistles directly, and in their form no less than their substance, from Christ the Lord. With no unworthy thought about their inspiration, we might very easily come to regard them as having passed through the mind of St. John, and having been recast, in their form at least, in the passage. What they would have been, if they had undergone any such modifying process as this, St. John's own Epistles tell us. But nothing of the kind has found place. It is the Lord Himself who speaks throughout; who not merely suggests the thoughts, but dictates the words. That St. John is here merely his organ, that the Master is speaking and not the servant, is, I say, remarkably attested

in the fact of the numerous points of contact and coincidence between these seven Epistles and the words of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, in the three synoptic Gospels above all. Had these coincidences been all or nearly all with St. John's own Gospel, this might have suggested quite a different explanation. But it is mainly the three earlier Gospels which furnish them. Thus in this Sardian Epistle alone, where, it is true, the points of resemblance are more numerous than anywhere else, spiritual activity is set forth as a watching, ver. 3; with which compare Matt. xxiv. 42; xxv. 13; xxvi. 41; Mark xiii. 37. Christ likens his unlooked-for coming to that of a thief (*ibid.*); He does the same, Matt. xxiv. 43; Luke xii. 39. He speaks here of blotting out a name from the book of life (ver. 5), there of names written in the book of life (Luke x. 20); here of confessing his servants before his Father (*ibid.*), the parallels of which from the Gospels have just been given. The remarkable reappearance in this and in all these Epistles of the words so often on our Lord's lips, according to the three first Gospels, but never noticed in the fourth, '*He that hath an ear, let him hear*' (Matt. xi. 15; xiii. 9, 43; Mark iv. 9, 23; vii. 16, 33; Luke viii. 8; xiv. 35), has been dwelt on already, p. 95.

Ver. 6. '*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*'—Compare ii. 7.

VI.

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA.

REV. iii. 7-13.

Ver. 7. *‘And to the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia write.’*—Philadelphia, at the foot of Mount Tmolus, on the banks of the little river Cogamus, which not far from the city falls into the Hermus (Pliny, *H. N.* v. 29, 30), was built by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamum (he died B.C. 138), from whom it derives its name. *Φιλαδελφία τῆς Ἀσίας* St. Ignatius calls it in the salutation of *his* Epistle, § 1; to distinguish it from other cities like-named. No city of Asia Minor suffered more, or so much, from violent and often-recurring earthquakes—*πόλις σεισμῶν πλήρης* Strabo calls it (xiii. 4), and describes it as almost depopulated in consequence of these. In the great earthquake in the reign of Tiberius Philadelphia was nearly destroyed (Tacitus, *Ann.* ii. 47). Despite of all drawbacks, it still retains a Christian population, has several churches and an active commerce.

‘These things saith He that is Holy.’—Christ claims here to be *ὁ Ἅγιος*, The Holy One; at Dan. ix. 24 He is *ἅγιος ἁγίων*: cf. Acts ii. 27; xiii. 35; Heb. vii. 26. In these latter passages, however, *ὅσιος*, not *ἅγιος*, stands in the original; nor are these words perfectly identical, though we have but the one word ‘holy’ by which to

render them both. The *ὅσιος*, if a man, is one who diligently observes all the sanctities of religion; anterior, many of them, to all law, the '*jus et fas*,' with a stress on the latter word; thus in the *Euthyphro* of Plato *ὀσιότης* is continually used as equivalent to *εὐσέβεια*. If applied to God, as at Deut. xxxii. 4; Rev. xv. 4; xvi. 5, and here, He is One in whom these eternal sanctities reside; who is Himself the root and ground of them all. The *ἅγιος* is the separate from evil, with the perfect hatred of that evil from which he is separate. But holiness in this absolute sense belongs only to God; not to Angels, for 'He charged his Angels with folly' (Job iv. 18), and certainly not to men (Jam. iii. 2; Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21). He then that claims to be '*The Holy One*,'—a name which Jehovah in the Old Testament continually claims for his own (Isai. vi. 3; xl. 25; xliii. 15),—implicitly claims to be God; takes to Himself a title which is God's alone, which it would be blasphemy for any other to appropriate; and, unless we are prepared for the alternative that He is guilty of this, can only be accepted as Himself God (see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 88).

'*He that is true.*'—We must not confound *ἀληθινός* (= 'verus') with *ἀληθής* (= 'verax'). God is *ἀληθής* (= *ἀψευδής*, Tit. i. 2), as He cannot lie, the truth-speaking and truth-loving God; with whom every word is Yea and Amen; but He is *ἀληθινός*, as fulfilling all that is involved in the name God, in contrast with those who are called gods, but who, having the name of gods, have nothing of the truth, wicked spirits, or dead idols. That is *ἀληθινός* which fulfils its own idea to the highest possible degree; as Origen (*In Joan.* tom. ii. § 4) well puts it: *ἀληθινός, πρὸς ἀντιδιαστολήν σκιᾶς καὶ τύπου*

καὶ εἰκόνας. Nor is ἀληθινός only, as when thus predicated of God, the true as contrasted with the absolutely false; but as contrasted with the subordinately true, with all imperfect and partial realizations of the idea; thus Christ is φῶς ἀληθινόν (John i. 9; 1 John ii. 8), ἄρτος ἀληθινός (John vi. 32), ἄμπελος ἀληθινή (John xv. 1); there is a σκηνὴ ἀληθινή in heaven (Heb. viii. 2). In each of these cases the antithesis is not between the true and the false, but between the perfect and the imperfect, the idea fully, and the idea only partially, realized; for John the Baptist also was a light (John v. 35), and Moses gave bread from heaven (Ps. cv. 40), and Israel was a vine of God's planting (Ps. lxxx. 8), and the tabernacle pitched in the wilderness, if only a figure of the true, was yet pitched at God's express command (Exod. xxv.). Christ then, in declaring Himself ὁ ἀληθινός, declares that whatever names, titles, offices He assumes, these in Him are realized to the full, reach their culminating glory; that the idea and the fact in Him are, what they never are nor can be in any other, absolutely commensurate.

'He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.'—Let us note here, but only that we may avoid, a not uncommon error of interpretation, namely, the identifying, or confounding, of this *'key of David'* with the *'key of knowledge,'* which in the days of his earthly ministry Christ accused the Scribes that they had taken away (Luke xi. 52). They who thus identify the two regard Him as here claiming to be the One who unlooses the seals of Scripture, opens the closed door into its inner chambers; who by his advent first made intelligible the dark and obscure prophecies of the Old Testament, and by his Spirit opens and enlightens the eyes of men to see and under-

stand the deep things which are written in his Word. Into this erroneous interpretation Origen not unfrequently falls, bringing Rev. v. 7-9 into relation with these two passages as a third, having the same import; thus *In Joan.* tom. v. § 4; *Sel. in Psalm.* Ps. i.; Hilary no less (*Prol. in Libr. Psalm.* §§ 5, 6); and Jerome (*Ep.* 50, *de Stud. Script.*). But ‘the key’ is ἐξουσία σὺμβολον (Andreas), the symbol of power (cf. xx. 1); and ‘the key of David’ is ‘the key of the house of David,’ of that royal household whereof David was chief, and all his servants members. Cocceius: ‘Clavem Davidis vocat, quia ea regia clavis, et is tempore ministerii sui clausit et aperuit, typum Christi gerens; vide Ps. ci. 4-8.’ But David being a type of Christ, so eminent a one, that Christ more than once actually bears his name (Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24), ‘the house of David’ alluded to thus can mean nothing less than the heavenly house, the kingdom of heaven; and the Lord is, in fact, declaring, ‘I have the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’ Those keys which He committed to Peter and his fellow Apostles (Matt. xvi. 19), He announces here to be in the highest sense his own. It depends on Him, the supreme κληροῦχος in the house of God, who shall see the King’s face, and who shall be excluded from it. Men are admitted into, or shut out from, that presence according to the good pleasure of his will; for it is He, and no other, ‘that openeth, and no man shutteth; that shutteth, and no man openeth.’ Christ, as we learn here, has not so committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with the power of binding and loosing, to any other, his servants, but that He still retains the highest administration of them in his own hands. If at any time there is error in their binding and loosing, if they make sad the heart which He has not made sad, if they speak peace to the heart to

which He has not spoken peace (Ezek. xiii. 19), then his sentence stands, and not theirs. For the promise that He would ratify and confirm in heaven the judgments of his Church on earth, could only be absolute and unconditional so long as the Church retained such a discernment of spirits as was never at fault. When once this had departed from it, when therefore it was exposed to possible mistake and error, from that moment the promise could be only conditional. From the highest tribunal upon earth there lies an appeal to a tribunal of yet higher instance in heaven; to his '*that openeth, and no man shutteth; that shutteth, and no man openeth;*' and when through ignorance, or worse than ignorance, any wrong has been done to any of his servants here, He will redress it there, disallowing and reversing in heaven the mistaken or unrighteous sentences of earth. It was in faith of this that Hus, when the greatest Council which Christendom had seen for a thousand years delivered his soul to Satan, did himself confidently commend it to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same confidence, many a faithful confessor at Rome or Madrid has walked to the stake, his yellow *san-benito* all painted over with devils in token and prophecy of those with whom his portion should be; but has never doubted the while that his lot should be indeed with Him who retains in his own hands '*the key of David;*' who thus could open for him, and who would, though all who visibly represented here the Church had shut him out with extreme malediction at once from the Church militant on earth and the Church triumphant in heaven.

That the substrate of this language, and, so to say, the suggestion of this thought, is to be sought at Isai. xxii., there can be no reasonable doubt. The prophet there

describes the shameful rejection of Shebna, the major-domûs or chief *οἰκονόμος* of the king, who had occupied for a while the place of highest dignity and honour (1 Kin. iv. 6; xviii. 3; 2 Chron. xxvi. 21), but whom the Lord beheld as unworthy of this, and from which He puts him down with shame and dishonour, with the substitution of Eliakim in his room, and the installation of the one into the honours and dignities which the other had lost. It needs only to quote the words as they occur in the Septuagint: *δώσω αὐτῷ τὴν κλεῖδα οἴκου Δαυὶδ ἐπὶ τῷ ὄμφῳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀνοίξει καὶ οὐκ ἔσται ὁ ἀποκλείων, καὶ κλείσει καὶ οὐκ ἔσται ὁ ἀνοίγων* (ver. 22). The prophet describes all this with an emphasis and fulness, which, however highly we may conceive of Eliakim, is surprising and inexplicable, until we look beyond that present, and read in that Scripture not merely the history of a revolution in the royal palace or house of David,—a putting down of one and setting up of another; but, over and above this, the type and real prophecy of an event immeasurably greater, the indignant rejection of all those unworthy stewards who in God's spiritual house had long abused their position, with the exaltation of the true Steward of the mysteries of God, who should be faithful in all his house, in their room. Vitringa (*Comm. in Esai.* xxii.): 'Quæ Eliakimo promittitur prærogativa dignitatis, fore ut claves gerens Domûs Davidis clauderet et aperiret solus, et omnis ab eo suspenderetur sarcina et decus Domûs Davidis (in quam hîc cadit emphasis): tam magnifice et ample dictum est, ut plus dixisse videretur Propheta quam debebat, si id in aliquo subjecto nobiliore, cujus Eliakimus typum gerere poterat, olim illustrius non consequeretur exemplum. Certe sunt verbi prophetici recessus profundi.'

Ver. 8. *'I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.'*—This *'open door'* is best explained by a reference to 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; Acts xiv. 27; Col. iv. 3. Vitringa: *'Notat commodam Evangelii prædicandi occasionem.'* To this Philadelphian Church, weak probably in numbers, enjoying few worldly advantages, God had opened *'a great door and effectual'* for the declaring of his truth; and, though there were many adversaries, none could shut it. For was not He who opened, the same who had *'the key of David'*? and when He opened, none could shut; when he made room for his truth in the heart of one or of many (Acts xvi. 14; Job xxxiii. 16), none could hinder it from having free course and being glorified; even as, if He shut and withheld a blessing, all other might and power would be wholly unavailing to make for it an entrance there.

'For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.'—They were probably but a little flock, poor in worldly goods, of small account in the eyes of men (cf. 1 Cor. i. 26–28), having *'little strength'*—not *'a little strength,'* which would rather be an acknowledgment of power than of weakness—the fitter therefore that God should be glorified in them and by them; even as He *had* been; for, put to the proof, they had kept his word, and had not denied his name (Zech. xii. 8; Isai. lvi. 4, 5). The aorists, *ἐτήρησας, οὐκ ἠρνήσω,* refer to some distinct occasions in the past, when, being thus put to the test, they had approved themselves faithful to Him.

Ver. 9. *'Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy*

feet, and to know that I have loved thee.—Here is the reward of their faithfulness, of the entrance which they had made by that ‘*open door*’ which the Lord set before them. The promise to Philadelphia, in respect of Jewish adversaries, is larger and richer than that to Smyrna. All which Christ there promised was, that these enemies should not prevail against *them* (ii. 9, 10); but here are better promises, namely, that *they* shall prevail against their enemies; and that with a victory the most blessed of all, in which victors and vanquished should be blessed alike, and should rejoice together. In reward of their faithfulness, they should see some of these fierce gainsayers and opposers, some of this ‘*synagogue of Satan*’ (see ii. 9; cf. Jer. ix. 2: *σύνωδος ἀθετούντων*), falling on their faces, and owning that God was with them of a truth. The ‘*worship*’ before their feet, of course, does not mean more than this; cf. Isai. xlix. 23; lx. 14; Matt. viii. 2; 2 Kin. ii. 15; Dan. ii. 46. This act of homage, the *προσκυνεῖν*, may imply much more (John iv. 21; Rev. xiv. 19; Acts viii. 27); but manifestly does not so here. It is only *some* of their adversaries who shall worship thus; for there is no promise during the present dispensation that *all* Israel, but only that a remnant, shall be saved (Rom. ix. 27). In our Version we have failed to express, that they are only *some* ‘*of the synagogue of Satan*’ who should thus acknowledge the presence of God in the Church of his dear Son, should look at Him whom they had pierced (Zech. xii. 10), and own that this Jesus of Nazareth was indeed He of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, that should turn iniquity from Jacob. In connexion with this promise, there is an interesting passage in the Epistle of Ignatius to this same Philadelphian Church (c. 6), implying the

actual presence in the midst of it, of converts from Judaism, who now preached the faith which once they persecuted. We may say too that this same promise has been gloriously fulfilled to other Churches in our own days, or almost in our own days, as we call to mind the many of Germany's noblest theologians and philosophers, her Neanders and her Stahls; who, being of the stock of Abraham, have yet had the veil taken from their hearts, and owned of the Church of Christ that God was with it of a truth. It is a singular evidence of the complete change in the relations between the Jew and Gentile, and of both to the kingdom of God, that exactly this same promise should find place under the Old Covenant, while yet the parts are exchanged which the one and the other should fulfil (Isai. xlv. 14; xlix. 23; lx. 14).

Ver. 10. '*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*'—What does the Lord exactly mean here by '*the word of my patience*'? There are some who find reference to certain special words and sayings of Christ's, in which He has exhorted his servants to patience, or declared the need they would have of it; such words as occur at Luke viii. 15; Matt. x. 22; xxiv. 13; cf. Rev. i. 9. Much better, however, to take the whole Gospel as '*the word of Christ's patience,*' everywhere teaching, as it does, the need of a patient waiting for Christ, till He, the waited-for so long, shall at length appear. Observe the *benigna talio* of the kingdom of God: '*because thou hast kept*' (ἐτήρησας), therefore '*I also will keep*' (τηρήσω); '*because thou hast kept my word,* therefore in return I will *keep* thee.' The promise does not imply that the Philadelphian Church should be ex-

empted from persecutions which should come on all other portions of the Church; that by any special privilege they should be excused from fiery trials through which others should be called to pass. It is a better promise than this; and one which, of course, they share with all who are faithful as they are—to be kept *in* temptation, not to be exempted *from* temptation (τηρεῖν ἐκ not being here = τηρεῖν ἀπό, Jam. i. 27; Prov. vii. 5; cf. 2 Thess. iii. 3); a bush burning, and yet not consumed (cf. Isai. xliii. 2). They may take courage; the blasts of persecution will indeed blow; but He who permits, uses, and restrains them, will not suffer his barn-floor to be winnowed with so rough a wind that chaff and grain shall alike be borne away. This ‘*hour of temptation*’ is characterised as coming ‘*upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*’ These, according to the constant use of the Apocalypse, include all mankind, with the exception of the ἀπαρχὴ of the Church (vi. 10; xi. 10; xiii. 8, 14); who are contemplated as already seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus (Ephes. ii. 6). The great catastrophes which come upon the earth are ‘*temptations*’ to the world no less than to the Church. God is then putting ‘*them that dwell upon the earth*’ to proof, whether now at least they will not repent, and, when his judgments are in the world, learn righteousness, however they may in times past have hardened themselves against Him. So too such times of great tribulation are trials or ‘*temptations,*’ because they bring out the unbelief, hardness of heart, blasphemy against God, which were before latent in the children of this world; hidden from others, hidden from themselves, till that ‘*hour of temptation*’ came and revealed them (Rev. ix. 20, 21; xvi. 9, 11, 21). Thus Moses speaks of the plagues as the ‘*temptations of Egypt*’ (Deut. iv. 34;

vii. 19; xxix. 3); and they were such, inasmuch as they brought out the pride and obduracy that were in Pharaoh's heart and in his servants', as these would never in any other way have been revealed either to themselves or to others.

Ver. II. '*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*'—This announcement of the speedy coming of the Lord, the ever-recurring key-note of this book (cf. xxii. 7, 12, 20), is sometimes used as a word of fear for those who are abusing the Master's absence, wasting his goods and ill-treating their fellow-servants; careless and secure as men for whom no day of reckoning is in store (Matt. xxiv. 48-51; 2 Thess. i. 7-9; 1 Pet. iv. 5; cf. Jam. v. 9; Rev. ii. 5, 16); but sometimes as a word of infinite comfort for those who with difficulty and painfulness hold their ground. He that should bring the long contest at once to an end; who should at once turn the scale, and for ever, in favour of righteousness and truth, is even at the door (Jam. v. 8; Phil. iv. 5; 2 Thess. i. 20; Heb. x. 37; 2 Pet. iii. 14). Such a word of comfort is this announcement here: 'Yet a little while, and thy patience shall have its full reward; only in the interval, and till I come, *hold that fast which thou hast.*' That which Philadelphia '*had*' we have just seen—zeal, patience, with little means accomplishing not a little work.

'*That no man take thy crown.*'—These last words some have explained, 'that no man step into that place of glory which was designed for thee;' after the manner, for example, that Jacob stepped into Esau's place (Gen. xxv. 34; xxvii. 36); Judah into Reuben's (Gen. xlix. 4, 8); David into Saul's (1 Sam. xvi. 1, 13); Eliakim into Shebna's (Isai. xxii. 15-25); Benaiah into Joab's (1 Kin. ii. 35); Zadok into Abiathar's (ibid.); Matthias into Judas's

(Acts i. 25, 26); Gentiles into the place of Jews (Matt. 21, 43; Rom. xi. 11); men into that of angels; the number of the elect, as Augustine concludes from these words, remaining still the same, and having been determined from the beginning, only some filling the places which others have left empty, and thus taking their crown: *De Corrept. et Grat.* c. 13: 'Si enim alius non est accepturus, nisi iste perdidit, certus est numerus'; cf. Gregory the Great, *Moral.* xxxiv. 20). But these thus adduced *received* indeed a privilege or prerogative—a 'crown' we may call it, which others lost; they did not *take* it from those others (the 'accipiat' of the Vulgate is wrong here; it should be rather 'auferat'); and it is quite inconceivable that any who should ever himself wear the crown, should be set forth as *taking* it from another. This taking, or seeking to take, the crowns from others' brows is the part, not of the good who would wear them on their own, but of the wicked who would see others discrowned and disinherited like themselves. Instead of ascribing to the words any such meaning, we must regard them as exactly equivalent to those of St. Paul: 'Let no man *beguile you of your reward*' (*καταβραβεύετω ὑμᾶς*, Col. ii. 18); and as giving no slightest hint that what this Angel lost, another would gain; the crown which he forfeited, another would wear; and that other one who had despoiled him of it. Neither, again, may we understand '*thy crown*' as the crown 'which thou hast,' but the crown 'which thou mayest have' (cf. 2 Tim. iv. 8: *ἀπόκειται μοι ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος*). 'Let no man,' Christ would say, 'deprive thee of the glorious reward laid up for thee in heaven, of which many, my adversaries and thine, would fain rob thee; but which only one, even thyself, can ever cause thee to forfeit indeed.'

Ver. 12. *'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.'*—It need hardly be said, except that some have denied it, that this is a promise, as are all the others in these Epistles, of *future* blessedness, belonging not to the members of the Church militant here on earth, but of the Church triumphant in heaven. Marckius brings out here excellently well the force of the words, *'I will make'*: *'Nec illud hic prætermittendum est quod Christus se facturum suos tales dicit, cum præter gratiam Christi ad hoc prorsus necessarium, sic innuatur naturalis omnium a templo hoc abalienatio, debilitas summa, et fœditas non minor.'* Compare Matt. iv. 19: *'I will make you fishers of men.'* *'Pillar'* (*στῦλος*) is not to be interpreted here exactly as it is at Gal. ii. 9. The *'pillars'* there are certain eminent Apostles, the main supports, under Christ, of the Church in its militant condition here upon earth; and, as such, towering above the rest of the faithful. But there is no such comparative præminence indicated here; as is evident from the fact that the promise *to every one* of the faithful, to each that has overcome, is, that he shall be made *'a pillar in the temple of God'*; Christ so speaks, as Jerome (*in Gal. ii. 9*) says well, *'docens omnes credentes qui adversarium vicerint, posse columnas Ecclesiæ fieri.'* To find any allusion here, as Vitranga and others have done, to the two monumental pillars, Jachin and Boaz, which Solomon set up, not in the temple, but in the open court before the temple (1 Kin. vii. 21; 2 Chron. iii. 15, 17; Jer. lii. 17), is altogether beside the mark; the words which follow, *'and he shall go no more out,'* making this well nigh impossible. These famous pillars were *always without* the temple; they would therefore have served very ill to set forth the blessedness of the redeemed, who shall be *always within*

it. Other pillars might set forth this, but scarcely these, contradicting in their position the central intention of Christ's words here, which is to declare that he who overcomes shall dwell *in the house of God* for ever. 'He shall go no more out;' for, as the elect angels are *fixed* in obedience, and have over-lived the possibility of falling, have attained what the Schoolmen call the *beata necessitas boni*, so shall it be one day with the redeemed. Gerhard (*Locc. Theoll.* xxxii. 2): 'Erit perpetuus heres æternorum bonorum, nec ullius ἐκπτώσεως ipsi imminebit periculum, qui columna est, symbolum immobilitatis in statu gloriæ cælestis.' Once admitted into the heavenly kingdom, they have their place there for ever; the door is shut (*Matt.* xxv. 10; cf. *Gen.* vii. 16); not merely to exclude others, but safely to include them, who shall thus be 'ever with the Lord' (*1 Thess.* iv. 17). In that heavenly household the son, every son who has once entered, abideth for ever (*John* viii. 35; cf. *Isai.* xxii. 23); no wonder, therefore, that Augustine should exclaim, 'Quis non desideret illam Civitatem, unde amicus non exit, quo inimicus non intrat?'

'And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the City of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.'—Christ will write these names, of his God, and of the City of his God, upon *him* that overcometh—not upon *it*, the pillar. It is true indeed that there were sometimes inscriptions on pillars,—which yet would be *στήλαι* rather than *στῦλοι*,—but the image of the pillar is now dismissed, and only the conqueror remains. In confirmation of this, that it is the person and not the pillar, whom the Lord contemplates now, we find further on the redeemed having the name of God, or the seal of God, on their foreheads (*vii.* 3; *ix.* 4; *xiv.* 1; *xxii.* 4), with probable allusion to the

golden plate inscribed with the name of Jehovah, which the High Priest wore upon his (Exod. xxviii. 36–38). In the ‘kingdom of priests’ this dignity shall not be any more the singular prerogative of one, but the common dignity of all. Exactly in the same way, in the hellish caricature of the heavenly kingdom, the votaries of the Beast are stigmatics, having *his* name upon their foreheads (xiii. 16, 17; xvii. 5; and cf. xx. 4).—What the name of this ‘*City of my God*’ is, we are told Ezek. xlvi. 35: ‘The Lord is there’ (cf. Isai. lx. 14; Jer. xxxiii. 16). Any other name would but faintly express its glory; ‘having the glory of God’ (Rev. xxi. 11, 23). He that hath the name of this City written upon him is thereby declared free of it. Even while on earth he had his true *πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς* (Phil. iii. 20; see Ellicott thereon); the state, city, or country to which he belonged was a heavenly one; but still his citizenship was latent; he was one of God’s hidden ones; but now he is openly avouched, and has a right to enter in by the gates into the City (xxii. 14). This heavenly City, the City which hath the foundations, and for which Abraham looked (Heb. xi. 10), the ‘continuing City’ (xiii. 14), is but referred to here; the full and magnificent description of it is reserved as the fitting close of the Book (xxi. 10—xxii. 5); and not of this Book only, but of the whole Bible. It goes by many and glorious names in Scripture. ‘That great City, the holy Jerusalem,’ St. John calls it (xxi. 10); claiming for it this title of ‘holy,’ which the earthly Jerusalem once possessed (Matt. iv. 5), but which it had forfeited for ever. ‘Jerusalem which is above,’ St. Paul calls it (Gal. iv. 26); while elsewhere for him, or for another writing in his spirit, it is ‘the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem’ (Heb. xii. 22). It is the *ὡς Καλλιπόλις, ἡ ἄνω Καλλιπόλις*, as Cyril of

Alexandria has strikingly named it; being indeed that *Beautiful City*, of which Plato did but dream, when he devised this name (*Rep.* vii. 527 C); the Οὐρανόπολις, as Clement of Alexandria (*Pæd.* ii. 12) has so grandly called it, recovering and reclaiming for the City of God this magnificent title; which Greek sycophants in profane flattery had devised for quite another city (Athenæus, i. 36), for one ‘*rerum pulcherrima*’ as Virgil has not scrupled to call it, but if we may trust the pictures of it drawn by those who saw it closest and knew it best, far better deserving a name drawn from beneath than from above.

The epithet ‘*new*,’ given here to the heavenly Jerusalem, sets it in contrast with the old, worn-out, sinful city bearing the same name; for *καινός* expresses this antithesis of the new to the old *as the out-worn*; its true antithesis being not *ἀρχαῖος*, but *παλαιός*; thus *καινός ἄνθρωπος* (Ephes. ii. 15), *καινή κτίσις* (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15), *καινὸν ἱμάτιον* (Matt. ix. 16), while *νέος* would but express that which had recently come into existence, as contrasted with that which had subsisted long; thus *Νεάπολις*, the city *recently* founded (see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 60). There would therefore have been no fitness in this last epithet here, for this New Jerusalem, ‘whose builder and maker is God,’ is at once new, in that sin has never wasted it, and at the same time the oldest of all, dating as far back as the promise of Gen. iii. Bengel has pertinently observed, that St. John writes always in his Gospel Ἱεροσόλυμα, in the Apocalypse always Ἱερουσαλήμ; and gives, no doubt, the true explanation of this: ‘Non temere Johannes in Evangelio omnibus locis scribit Ἱεροσόλυμα de urbe veteri: in Apocalypsi semper Ἱερουσαλήμ de Urbe Cælesti. Ἱερου-

σαλήμ est appellatio Hebraica, originaria et sanctior; 'Ἱεροσόλυμα deinceps obvia, Græca, magis politica.'

Strange conclusions have been drawn from the words that follow: 'which cometh down out of heaven from my God.' The fancy of an actual material city to be let down bodily from heaven to earth, an 'aurea atque gemmata in terris Hierusalem,' as Jerome somewhat contemptuously styles it (*In Esai. Præf. ad Lib.* 18; cf. Origen, *De Princ.* ii. 11. 2), has been cherished in almost all ages of the Church by some, who have been unable to translate the figurative language of Scripture into those far more glorious realities of the heavenly πολιτεία, whereof those figures were the outward garment and array. Thus the Montanists believed that the New Jerusalem would descend at Pepuza in Phrygia, the head-quarters of their sect; and already, according to Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* iii. 24), there were vouchsafed from time to time signs and prophetic outlines in heaven of the fabric of the City which should thus be let down to earth. For forty days, he assures us, morning and evening, the splendid vision and sky-pageant of this City had been seen suspended in the air. But if only it be a City 'in which righteousness dwelleth,' it will little matter whether we go to it, or it come to us; and in this shape assuredly it will *not* come.¹

¹ Glorious things have been spoken of this City of God, and not in the sacred Scriptures only, but also in the writings of uninspired men, in whose hearts, while they have mused on that Heavenly Jerusalem, the fire has kindled, and they have spoken with their tongues. Thus our own 'Jerusalem, my happy home,' is worthy of no mean place among spiritual songs. But the German and the Latin hymnologies are far richer, both indeed are extraordinarily rich, in these hymns celebrating the glories of the New Jerusalem. Thus in German how lovely is Meyfart's (1590-1642) 'Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt' (Bunsen, *Gesangbuch*, no. 495); but grander still, and not in Bunsen's collection, Kosegarten's (1758-1818) 'Stadt Gottes, deren

‘And I will write upon him my new name.’—This ‘new name’ is not ‘The Word of God’ (xix. 13), nor yet ‘King of kings, and Lord of lords’ (xix. 16), as some will have it. It is true that both of these appear in this Book as names of Christ; but for all that neither of them could be called his ‘new name;’ the faithful having been familiar with them from the beginning. The ‘new name’ is that mysterious, and in the necessity of things uncommunicated, and for the present time incommunicable, name, which in that same sublimest of all visions is referred to: ‘He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself’ (xix. 12); for none except God can search out the deep things of God (1 Cor. ii. 12; cf. Matt. xi. 27; Judg. xiii. 18). But the mystery of this ‘new name,’ which no man by searching could find out, which in this present condition no man is so much as

diamantnen Ring’—and in the Latin, Hildebert (not to speak of Prudentius, *Psychom.* 823-887, Bernard of Clugny, *Laus Patrie Cælestis*, and many others), has set forth the beauty and the blessedness of that City of the living God, and his own longing to be numbered among the citizens of it, in verses such as these (see my *Sacred Latin Poetry*, 3rd edit. p. 337).

Me receptet Sion illa,
 Sion, David urbs tranquilla,
 Cujus faber auctor lucis,
 Cujus portæ lignum crucis,
 Cujus muri lapis vivus,
 Cujus custos Rex festivus.
 In hâc urbe lux solennis,
 Ver æternum, pax perennis;
 In hâc odor implens cælos,
 In hâc semper festum melos;
 Non est ibi corruptela,
 Non defectus, non querela;
 Non minuti, non deformes,
 Omnes Christo sunt conformes.
 Urbs cælestis, urbs beata,

Super petram collocata,
 Urbs in portu satis tuto,
 De longinquo te saluto,
 Te saluto, te suspiro,
 Te affecto, te requiro:
 Quantum tui gratulantur,
 Quam festive convivantur,
 Quis affectus eos stringat,
 Aut quæ gemma muros pingat,
 Quis chalcedon, quis jacinthus,
 Nôrunt illi qui sunt intus.
 In plateis hujus urbis,
 Sociatus piis turbis,
 Cum Moÿse et Eliâ,
 Pium cantem Alleluia.’

capable of receiving, shall be imparted to the saints and citizens of the New Jerusalem. They shall know, even as they are known (I Cor. xiii. 12).

Ver. 13. ‘*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*’—Cf. ii. 7. I cannot leave this Epistle, so full of precious promises to a Church, which, having little strength, had yet held fast the word of Christ’s patience, without citing a remarkable passage from Gibbon (*Decline and Fall*, c. lxiv.), in which he writes like one who almost believed that the threatenings and promises of God did fulfil themselves in history: ‘In the loss of Ephesus the Christians deplored the fall of the first Angel, the extinction of the first candlestick, of the Revelations; the desolation is complete; and the temple of Diana or the church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveller. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes; Sardes is reduced to a miserable village; the God of Mahomet, without a rival or a son, is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus, and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy, or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourscore years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and Churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect—a column in a scene of ruins,—a pleasing example that the paths of honour and safety may sometimes be the same.’

VII.

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA.

REV. iii. 14-22.

Ver. 14. ‘*And unto the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write.*’—Laodicea, called often Laodicea on the Lycus, to distinguish it from other cities (they were no less than six in all) bearing the same name, was a city in Southern Phrygia (Phrygia Pacatiana), midway between Philadelphia and Colosse. Its nearness to the latter city is more than once assumed in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 13, 15, 16). Its earliest name was Diospolis, then Rhoas (Pliny, *H. N.* v. 29); being rebuilt and adorned by Antiochus the Second, king of Syria, he called it Laodicea, after his wife Laodice, by whom he was afterwards poisoned. In Roman times it was a foremost city among those of the second rank in Asia Minor; ‘*celeberima urbs,*’ as Pliny calls it. Its commerce was considerable, being chiefly in the wools grown in the region round about, which were celebrated for their richness of colour and fineness of texture. The city suffered grievously in the Mithridatic War, but presently recovered again; it was overthrown by an earthquake in the reign of Nero (A.D. 61); but restored by the efforts of its own citizens, without any help sought from the Roman senate (Tacitus, *Annal.* xiv. 27).

Some have supposed that the negligent Angel of the Laodicean Church was that Archippus, for whom St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, adds the message, 'And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it' (Col. iv. 17). Bishop Lightfoot does not think it improbable. The urgency of this monition certainly seems to imply that St. Paul was not altogether satisfied with the manner in which Archippus was then fulfilling the 'ministry,' whatever that might be, which he had undertaken; and affording support to this conjecture is the fact that in the *Apostolical Constitutions* (viii. 46), which with much of later times also contain much of the very earliest, Archippus is distinctly named as first bishop of Laodicea. Let him have been the son of Philemon (Philem. 2), a principal convert in the Colossian Church, whose son therefore might very probably have been chosen to this dignity and honour, more perhaps for his father's merits than his own; and it would be nothing strange to find him some thirty years later holding his office still; while it would be only too consonant with the downward progress of things, that he who began slackly, who so soon required that 'Take heed' of St. Paul, should in the lapse of years have grown more and more negligent, till now he needed and received this sharpest reproof from his Lord. Whether the rebukes and threatenings contained in this Epistle did their work or not, it is only for Him who reads all and remembers all to know. But it is certain that the Church of Laodicea was in somewhat later times, so far as man's eye could see, in a flourishing condition. In numbers it increased so much that its bishop obtained metropolitan dignity; and A.D. 361 an important Church Council, that in which the Canon of Scripture was finally settled, was

held at Laodicea, and thence derives its name. But this at best was only a transient revival. All has perished now. He who removed the candlestick of Ephesus, has rejected Laodicea out of his mouth. The fragments of aqueducts and theatres spread over a vast extent of country tell of the former magnificence of this city; but of this once famous Church nothing survives. Recent travellers with difficulty discovered one or two Christians in the poor village which stands on the site occupied by Laodicea of old.

‘*These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness.*’—‘*The Amen*’ (the word only here is used as a proper name, or as a substantive, but compare Isai. lxx. 16) is He who can add a ‘*Verily, verily,*’ an ‘*Amen, amen,*’ to every word which He utters; as so frequently He does—the double ‘*Amen*’ indeed only in the Gospel of St. John (i. 51; iii. 3, 5, 11, and often; cf. Num. v. 22; Neh. viii. 6). He is ‘*the faithful and true Witness*’ in that He speaks what He knows, and testifies what He has seen. The thought is a favourite and ever-recurring one in the Gospel of St. John (iii. 11, 32, 33); but does not appear in any other. It may be interesting here to call to mind how the confessors of Lyons and Vienne, referring to these very words, put back from themselves the name of ‘*witnesses*’ (μάρτυρες), when others would have given it to them, saying that Christ was ‘*the faithful and true Witness,*’ that this title was not theirs, but His alone (Eusebius, *H. E.* v. 2).

Of the two epithets, the first, πιστός, expresses his entire trustworthiness. The word is employed in two very different senses in the New Testament as elsewhere, in an active and a passive,—now as trusting or believing (John xx. 27; Acts xiv. 1), now as trustworthy or to be believed

(2 Tim. ii. 13; 1 Thess. v. 24; 1 John i. 9). Men may be *πιστοί* in both senses, the active and the passive, as exercising faith, and as being worthy to have faith exercised in them; God can be *πιστός* only in the latter. The Arians found this epithet applied to Christ (Heb. iii. 2), and, as though the word was and could be only used in the former sense, in that of exercising faith upon some higher object, itself of course a creaturely act, they drew from the application of this epithet to the Son an argument against his divinity. I quote the clear and excellent answer of Athanasius (*Library of the Fathers, Treatises against Arianism*, p. 289): ‘Further, if the expression, “Who was faithful,” is a difficulty to them from the thought that “faithful” is used of Him as of others, as if He exercises faith and so receives the reward of faith, they must proceed to find fault with Moses, for saying, “God faithful and true,” and with St. Paul for writing, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” But when the sacred writers spoke thus, they were not thinking of God in a human way, but they acknowledged two senses of the word “faithful” in Scripture, first believing, then trustworthy, of which the former belongs to man, the latter to God. Thus Abraham was faithful because he believed God’s word; and God faithful, for, as David says in the Psalm, “The Lord is faithful in all his words,” or is trustworthy, and cannot lie. Again, “If any faithful woman have widows,” she is so called for her right faith; but, “It is a faithful saying,” because what He hath spoken hath a claim on our faith, for it is true, and is not otherwise. Accordingly the words, “Who is faithful to Him that made Him,” imply no parallel with others, nor mean that by having faith He became well-pleasing, but that, being Son of God the True,

He too is faithful, and ought to be believed in all He says and does.'

It will be seen that the *truthfulness* or veracity of Christ as a Witness is asserted in the *πιστός*, not, as might at first sight be assumed, in the *ἀληθινός* that follows, or at least in it only as one quality among many. Christ is a *μάρτυς ἀληθινός* (not *ἀληθής*), in that He realized and fulfilled in the highest sense all that belonged to a witness. Three things are necessary thereunto. He must have been *αὐτόπτης*; must have seen with his own eyes that which he professes to attest (Acts i. 21, 22). He must be competent to relate and reproduce this information for others. He must be willing faithfully and truthfully to do this. The meeting of these three conditions in Christ, and not the presence of the last only, constitutes Him a 'true Witness,' or one in whom all the highest qualities of a witness met.

'*The beginning of the creation of God.*'—There are two ways in which *grammatically* it would be possible to understand *ἀρχή* here (see Pott, *Etym. Forsch.* vol. iii. p. 744; Delitzsch *On Proverbs*, p. 141). The word *might* imply that Christ was passively this '*beginning of the creation of God,*' as the first and most excellent creature of God's hands, his *chef-d'œuvre*; thus Jacob addresses Reuben as *ἀρχὴ τέκνων μου* (Gen. xlix. 3; cf. Deut. xxi. 17). Or the words might declare of Christ that He was the active source, author, and, in this sense, '*beginning*' and beginner of all creation; thus, in the Book of Proverbs, Wisdom claims to be *ἀρχὴ ὁδῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ*, viii. 22; as in the words of the Creed, 'by whom all things were made.' But while both meanings are possible so long as the words are merely considered by themselves, and without reference to any other statements concerning Christ, the analogy of

faith imperatively demands the adoption of the latter. The Catholic Church has ever rejected the other as an Arian gloss; impossible to accept, because it would place this passage in contradiction with every passage in Scripture which claims divine attributes, and not creaturely merely, for the Son. To go no further than these seven Epistles, all the titles which Christ claims for Himself in them are either necessarily divine, or, at any rate, not inconsistent with his divinity; and this must be so no less. He is not, therefore, the ‘*principium principiatum*,’ but rather the ‘*principium principians*,’—not He whom God created the first, but He who was the fountain-source of all the creation of God, by whom God created all things (John i. 1–3; Col. i. 15, 18); even as throughout this Book Christ appears as the Author of creation (v. 13). The Arians, as is well known, explained these words in the same way as they explained Col. i. 15, which is, indeed, the great parallel passage, as though ἀρχή was ‘the begun,’ and not ‘the beginning;’ and they brought Job xl. 19 into comparison. But for the use of ἀρχή in the sense and with the force which we here demand for it, as ‘*principium*,’ not ‘*initium*’ (though these Latin words do not adequately reproduce the distinction), compare the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, c. 25, in which Hades addresses Satan as ἡ τοῦ θανάτου ἀρχὴ καὶ ρίζα τῆς ἁμαρτίας; and further, Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 15): ὁ Θεὸς ἐστὶν πάντων αἰτία καὶ ἀρχή; and again, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* iv. 25): ὁ Θεὸς δὲ ἀναρχος, ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄλων παντελής. Add from Tertullian (*Adv. Hermog.* 19): ‘*Principii vocabulum, quod est ἀρχή, non tantum ordinativum, sed et potestativum capit principatum.*’ He is not merely the first in order, but dynamically the beginning, the author. These and innumerable other passages abundantly vindicate

cate for ἀρχή that active sense which, as I have said, the analogy of faith compels us to claim for it here. On the words of St. Paul which exactly say over again of Christ what He here says of Himself, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως (Col. i. 15), the reader is referred to the grand discussion in Lightfoot's *Colossians*, in loco.

Ver. 15. *'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.'*—Ζεστός, from ζέω, ferveo, cf. Acts xviii. 25; Rom. xii. 11 (ζέοντες τῷ πνεύματι), love to God being a divine heat, a divine fire (Cant. viii. 6; Luke xxiv. 32). Ὀφελον, properly the second aorist of ὀφέλω, but now grown into an adverbial use (= 'utinam'), has so far forgotten what at the first it was, as to be employed promiscuously in all numbers and all persons; cf. 1 Cor. iv. 8; 2 Cor. xi. 1. It governs an indicative, not an optative, here (ἦς, not εἴης, is the right reading, and 'wast' should replace 'wert' in our Version), inasmuch as the Lord is not desiring that something even now *might be*, but only that something *might have been*. In form a *wish*, it is in reality a *regret*.

Shall we take this *'I would thou wert cold or hot,'* merely as the expression of a holy impatience at the half-and-half position of this Laodicean Angel; without pushing the matter further, or attempting to explain to ourselves *how* the Lord should have put coldness as one of two alternatives to be desired; as though He had said, 'I would thou wouldst take one side or other, be avowedly with me, or avowedly against me, ranged under my banner, or under that of my enemies, that so I might understand how to deal with thee'? Hardly so. This impatience, looked at more closely, would not deserve to be called holy. It is the impatience of sinful man, not of the Son of God; to whom indecision between good and evil must

be preferable to decision for evil. The state of lukewarmness must be in itself worse than even that of coldness, before the Lord could thus deliberately desire the latter as a preferable alternative. But how? for this certainly demands an explanation. Lukewarmness is greatly inferior to heat, but *seems* preferable to absolute coldness in the things of God. To have only half a heart for these things is bad; but wherein is it better to have no heart at all? How shall we then understand this exclamation, '*I would thou wert cold or hot*'? Best, I think, in this way, namely, by regarding the '*cold*' here as one hitherto untouched by the powers of grace. There is always hope of such an one, that, when he does come under those powers, he may become a zealous and earnest Christian. He is not one on whom the grand experiment of the Gospel has been tried and has failed. But the '*lukewarm*' is one who has tasted of the good gift and of the powers of the world to come, who has been a subject of Divine grace, but in whom that grace has failed to kindle more than the feeblest spark. The publicans and harlots were '*cold*,' the Apostles '*hot*.' The Scribes and Pharisees, such among them as that Simon in whose house the Lord sat and spake the parable of the fifty and the five hundred pence (Luke vii. 36-47), they were '*lukewarm*.' It was from among the '*cold*,' and not the '*lukewarm*,' that He drew recruits; from among them came forward the candidates for discipleship and apostleship and the crown of life, Matthew, and Zacchæus, and the Magdalene, and the other woman that had been a sinner (if indeed another), and all those, the publicans and harlots, that entered into the kingdom of heaven, while the Scribes and Pharisees continued without; and above all Paul the Apostle, who, having been a persecutor

and injurious, was changed into a preacher of that faith which he persecuted before. That woman 'which was a sinner,' for example, having been 'cold,' passed from that coldness to the fervency of a divine heat, at which there is little likelihood that the 'lukewarm' Simon ever arrived (Luke vii. 47; Matt. xxi. 28-31).

It is thus that Gregory the Great explains these words (*Reg. Past.* iii. 34): 'Qui enim adhuc in peccatis est, conversionis fiduciam non amittit. Qui vero post conversionem tepuit, et spem, quæ esse potuit de peccatore, subtrahit. Aut calidus ergo quisque esse, aut frigidus queritur, ne tepidus evomatur, ut videlicet aut necdum conversus, adhuc de se spem conversionis præbeat, aut jam conversus in virtutibus inardescat.' Compare Origen (*De Princip.* iii. 4): 'Forte utilius videatur obtineri animam a carne, quam residere in suis propriis voluntatibus. Namque quoniam nec calida dicitur esse, nec frigida, sed in medio quodam tepore perdurans, tardam et satis difficilem conversionem poterit invenire. Si vero carni adhæreat, ex his ipsis interdum malis quæ ex carnis vitiis patitur, satiata aliquando et repleta, velut gravissimis oneribus luxuriæ ac libidinis fatigata, facilius et velocius converti a materialibus sordibus ad cælestium desiderium et spiritualem gratiam potest.' Jeremy Taylor, too, in the second of his sermons, *Of Lukewarmness and Zeal*, discusses this point, namely, *why* the Lord preferred either 'hot' or 'cold' to 'lukewarm,' at considerable length; and urges well that it is the 'lukewarm,' not as a *transitional*, but as a *final* state, which is thus the object of the Lord's abhorrence: 'In feasts or sacrifices the ancients did use *apponere frigidam* or *calidam*; sometimes they drank hot drink, sometimes they poured cold upon their gravies or in their wines, but no services of tables or

altars were ever with lukewarm. God hates it worse than stark cold; which expression is the more considerable, because in natural and superinduced progressions from extreme to extreme, we must necessarily pass through the midst; and therefore it is certain a lukewarm religion is better than none at all, as being the doing some parts of the work designed, and nearer to perfection than the utmost distance could be; and yet that God hates it more, must mean, that there is some appendant evil in this state which is not in the other, and that accidentally it is much worse: and so it is, if we rightly understand it; that is, if we consider it not as a being in, or passing through, the middle way, but as a state and a period of religion. If it ✓ be in motion, a lukewarm religion is pleasing to God; for God hates it not for its imperfection, and its natural measures of proceeding; but if it stands still and rests there, it is a state against the designs and against the perfection of God: and it hath in it these evils.'

I must not leave these words without observing that there is another way of explaining this, '*I would thou wert cold or hot,*' which has found favour with some in modern times. Urging that food, when *either* cold or hot, is pleasant to the taste, and only when tepid unwelcome, they make *both* the '*cold*' and the '*hot*' to express spiritual conditions absolutely acceptable in themselves, the only *tertium comparationis* being the nausea created by the tepid, and they affirm that nothing further has a right here to be pressed. But assuredly there is much more in these words than this.

Ver. 16. '*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*'—The land of Canaan is said to have *spued out* its former inhabitants for their abominable doings; the children of

Israel being warned that they commit not the same, lest in like manner it *spue* out them (Lev. xviii. 28 ; xx. 22). But the threatening here is more terrible still. It is nothing less than to be spued *out of the mouth of Christ*, to be rejected as with moral loathing and disgust, by Him ; to exchange the greatest possible nearness to Him for the remotest distance. At the same time, in the original the language is not quite so severe as in our Version ; the threat does not present itself as one about to be put into *immediate* execution. The long-suffering of Christ has not been all exhausted : μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι, ‘ I am about,’ or ‘ I have it in my mind, to spue thee out of my mouth,’ as the Vulgate seeks to express it, ‘ *incipiam te evomere* ;’ that is, ‘ unless thou so takest to heart this threat that I shall never need to execute this threat’ (Jon. iii. 10 ; 1 Kin. xxi. 29). But if executed, it implies nothing less than absolute rejection, being equivalent to that ‘ *I will remove thy candlestick out of his place*’ (ii. 5), uttered against the Ephesian Angel. Not very different is the tropical use of πτύειν, καταπτύειν, and in Latin of ‘ *respuere*,’ ‘ *conspuere*,’ as = ‘ *repudiare*,’ ‘ *abhorrere ab aliquâ re*.’ Χλιαρός, aptly rendered in our Version ‘ *lukewarm*,’ is a word with which we are familiar enough in Homer ; but it there appears in an old Ionic subform as λιαρός (*Il.* ix. 477 ; *Od.* v. 268).

Ver. 17. ‘ *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods* (or as it is in the R. V., ‘ *and have gotten riches*’), *and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*’—There is a question whether this verse coheres the most closely with what goes before, or what follows after,—that is, whether Christ threatens to reject him from his mouth, because he says, ‘ *I am rich,*

and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ;' or whether, because he says he is all this, therefore Christ counsels him to buy of Him what will make him rich indeed (ver. 18). Our Translators regard the latter connexion as the right one ; and, by the punctuation which they have adopted, join this verse with that which follows after it, not with that which went before it. I doubt whether in this they have correctly done. I should prefer to place a colon at the end of ver. 16, and a full-stop at that of ver. 17, instead of the reverse, which has been their course.—These riches and other goods in which the Laodicean Church and Angel gloried we must understand as *spiritual* riches, in which they fondly imagined they abounded. Some interpreters take it in another sense, that they boasted of their worldly prosperity, their flourishing outward condition, and found in this a sign and token of God's favour towards them. But assuredly this is a mistake. It is in the sphere of spiritual things that the Lord is moving ; and this language in this application is justified by numerous passages in Scripture : as by Luke xii. 21 ; 1 Cor. i. 5 ; 2 Cor. viii. 9 ; above all, by two passages of holy irony, 1 Cor. iv. 8 and Hos. xii. 8 ; both standing in very closest connexion with this ; I can indeed hardly doubt that there is intended a reference to the latter of these in the words of our Lord. (The Laodicean Angel, and the Church which he was drawing into the same ruin with himself, were walking in a vain show and imagination of their own righteousness, their own advances in spiritual insight and knowledge.) That this may go hand in hand with the most miserable lack of all real grace, all true and solid advances in goodness, we have a notable example in the Pharisee of our Lord's parable (Luke xviii. 11, 12 ; cf. xvi. 15 ; 1 Cor. xiii. 1) ; and

so it was here. Rightly Richard of St. Victor: 'Dicis quod sum dives et locupletatus, sive videlicet per scientiæ cognitionem, sive per Scripturæ prædicationem, sive per secularis eloquentiæ nitorem, sive per sacramentorum administrationem, sive per pontificalis apicis dignitatem, sive per vulgi laudem inanem.'

Such was their estimate of themselves; but now follows the terrible reality, namely, Christ's estimate of them: '*And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*' Here, as so often, our Version, to its loss, has taken no note of the article which, going before the two first adjectives, raises them to the dignity of substantives, while the three which follow are added as qualifying adjectives. An exact parallel, and, singularly enough, much more than a mere verbal parallel, occurs Isai. xlvii. 8 (LXX): *νῦν δὲ ἄκουε ταῦτα, τρυφερά, ἢ καθημένη, ἢ πεποιθυῖα, ἢ λέγουσα ἐν καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἑτέρα, κ.τ.λ.* Best therefore to translate, '*And knowest not that thou art the wretched and the miserable one, and poor, and blind, and naked.*' *Ταλαίπωρος*, '*wretched*,' in the New Testament occurs only here and Rom. vii. 24: it is commonly derived by the grammarians from *τλάω*, and *πῶρος* in the sense of grief, but thought now to be a poetical recasting of *ταλαπείριος*, in which case we should find *πειρά*, a sharp piercing point, in the latter syllables. *Ἐλεεινός*, a later form of the word whose Attic form is *ἐλεινός* (Lobeck, *Phrygichus*, p. 87), occurs only here and 1 Cor. xv. 19; it sets him forth as an object of extremest pity (*ἐλέους ἄξιος*, Suidas), as in certain peril of eternal death, if he should remain what he was. The charge of blindness would seem to imply that the Laodicean Church boasted of spiritual insight. Like some before them, being blind

they yet said, 'We see' (John ix. 41). This blindness, of course, was not absolute and complete; else the 'eyesalve' which the Lord presently bids them to obtain of Him would have profited little. They were *μωπαζοντες*, blinking, as St. Peter describes some, he too joining *τυφλός* and *μωπαζών* (2 Pet. i. 9).

Ver. 18. *'I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.'*—Marcianus: 'Triplici malo paupertatis, nuditatis, et cæcitatatis, triplex opponitur merx, aurum igne coctum, vestimenta alba, et collyrium.' There is a slight touch of irony, but the irony of divine love, in the words. (He who might have commanded, prefers rather to counsel; He who might have spoken as from heaven, conforms Himself, so far as the outward form of his words reaches, to the language of earth.) To the merchants and factors of this wealthy mercantile city He addresses Himself in their own dialect. Laodicea, on the great high road of Oriental commerce, was a city of extensive money transactions; so that Cicero, journeying to or from his province, proposes to take up money there (*Epp. ad Div.* ii. 17; iii. 5). Christ here invites to dealings with Himself. He has gold of so fine a standard that none will reject it. (The wools of Laodicea, of a raven blackness, were famous throughout the world. He has raiment of dazzling white for as many as will receive it at his hands. There were ointments for which many of the Asiatic cities, perhaps Laodicea among the number, were famous; but He, as He will presently announce, has eyesalve more precious than them all.) Would it not be wise to transact their chief business with Him? Thus Perkins (*Exposition upon*

Rev. i. ii. iii., Works, vol. iii. p. 363): ‘Christ saith, “*I counsel thee to buy of Me*;” where He alludeth to the outward state of this city, for it was rich, and also given to much traffic, as histories record, and therefore He speaks to them in their own kind, as if He should say, Ye are a people exercised in much traffic, and delighted with nothing more than buying and selling. Well, I have wares that will serve your turn, as gold, garments, and oil; therefore come and *buy of Me*.’

We must not fail to put an emphasis on that ‘*of Me*.’ ‘In Me,’ Christ would say, ‘are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’ His Apostle once already had reminded the Colossians, neighbours of the Laodiceans, that this was so; and that there was no growth for the Church, or for any member of the Church, except through holding the Head (Col. ii. 3, 19); that all self-chosen ways of will-worship might have a show of wisdom, but puffed up, and did not build up (ii. 10-15); and out of the deep anxiety which he evidently felt for both these sister Churches alike (ii. 1), he had desired that the Epistle to the Colossians should be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans (iv. 16). But they of Laodicea had not learned their lesson. St. Paul’s ‘great conflict’ for them had been well nigh in vain; and now the Lord, repeating his servant’s lesson, gathers up into a single point, concentrates in that single phrase, ‘*buy of Me*,’ the whole lesson of the Epistle to the Colossians.

The invitation to ‘*buy*’ of Him, who is so much more frequently set forth as making a free gift of all which He imparts to men (Rom. vi. 23; Rev. xxii. 17), is drawn from Isai. lv. 1, with which we may compare Prov. iii. 14; xxiii. 23; Matt. xiii. 44, 46. The price which they should pay was this, the renunciation of all vain reliance on their

own righteousness and wisdom; the price which in another Epistle St. Paul declared he had so gladly paid, that so he might himself win Christ (Phil. iii. 7, 8); the ἀποτάσσεσθαι πᾶσι, which the Lord long before had declared to be the necessary condition of his discipleship (Luke xiv. 33). This is the price, contemplated rather in its negative aspect; on its positive side it is the earnest striving after, and longing for, the gift, the reaching out after it, the opening of the mouth wide that He may fill it. Vitringa: ‘Quæ beneficia Dominus vult ut emant, h. e. secundum conditiones fœderis gratiæ pro iis expendant pretium abnegationis sui ipsius et mundanarum cupiditatum; quod hic non habet rationem meriti, sed tamen pretii, quia in regeneratione homo aliis quibusdam rebus sibi hactenus caris renunciat, ut pretioso dono justitiæ Christi potiatur.’

What does the Lord counsel this Angel that he shall ‘buy;’ what precious things name, the which when he has made his own, he shall be no longer ‘poor, and blind, and naked’? They are three. And first, as he is ‘poor’—‘gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.’ A comparison with 1 Pet. i. 7 (cf. Zech. xiii. 9; Mal. iii. 3; Prov. xvii. 3; Jam. i. 3) teaches us that by this ‘gold’ we must understand faith; for faith being a gift of God, must therefore be bought of Christ (Luke xvii. 5; cf. Ps. lxxii. 15, according to the right translation); and such faith as would stand the test, would endure in the furnace of affliction, in the πύρωσις (1 Pet. iv. 12); Vitringa: ‘Vera et solida fides, quæ sustinere possit afflictiones.’ Then should he be rich indeed; this is the true πλουτίζειν (1 Cor. i. 5), better than that spoken of in the book of Job (xxii. 23, 24); though that, as God’s gift, might be good; then should he be indeed one εἰς Θεὸν πλουτῶν (Luke xii. 21), rich toward God, not walking, as now, in a vain imagina-

tion of wealth which he had not.—Πεπυρωμένον ἐκ πυρός = δοκιμαζόμενον διὰ πυρός, 1 Pet. i. 7 (cf. Zech. xiii. 9; Ps. lxxv. 10; Prov. x. 20; LXX); for, in the words of the Latin poet (Ovid, *Fust.* iv. 785):

‘Omnia purgat edax ignis vitiumque metallis
Excoquit.’

The Latin language, which has dropped the noun substantive corresponding to the Greek πῦρ and to our ‘fire,’ taking ‘ignis’ instead, has yet ‘purus,’ closely connected with these, and attesting to a sense of the cleansing, purifying energy of fire. Compare Pott, *Etym. Forsch.* vol. ii. pt. ii. p. 1102.

But secondly, as he is ‘naked,’ ‘Buy of Me,’ says the Lord, ‘white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.’ Instead of the αἰσχύνη here, we have in the parallel passage, xvi. 15, ἀσχημοσύνη (cf. Ezek. xvi. 8, LXX), translated also ‘shame,’ but better, ‘unseemliness’ or ‘uncomeliness;’ cf. τὰ ἀσχήμονα, 1 Cor. xii. 23. ‘Do not appear’ is too weak a rendering of μὴ φανερωθῆ, which translate rather, ‘be not made manifest;’ so the R.V., φανεροῦσθαι expressing constantly the manifestations or revelations which God makes of the hidden things of men (John iii. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 11; Eph. v. 13); either now, or at that last day when every guest that has not on a wedding garment is at the same instant discovered and cast out (Matt. xxii. 11-13; cf. Isai. xlvii. 3; ἀνακαλυφθήσεται ἡ αἰσχύνη σου; Lam. i. 8). As stripping, and laying bare the nakedness, is a frequent method of putting to open shame (cf. 2 Sam. x. 4; Isai. xx. 4; Ezek. xvi. 37, 39; xxiii. 26, 29; Hos. ii. 3, 9; iii. 5; Mic. i. 8, 11; Nah. iii. 5; Rev. xvi. 15; xvii. 16), so the clothing with comely apparel those unclothed or ill-clothed before, of imparting honour; cf. Gen. xli. 42; Esth. vi. 7-11; Dan. v. 29;

Luke xv. 22 ; Zech. iii. 3-5 ; Ezek. xvi. 10-13 ; and above all, Gen. iii. 7, 21, where it is shown that God, and not himself, is the true coverer and concealer of the nakedness of man ; for while he can discover his own shame, it is God only who can cover it. This, ‘*the shame of the nakedness*’ of him who, professing Christ, has not put on Christ, *may be*, and often is, revealed in the present time ; it *must be* revealed in the last day (Matt. xxii. 11-13 ; Dan. xii. 2 ; 2 Cor. v. 10) ; looking on to which revelation, and that ‘*everlasting contempt*’ which shall then be the portion of so many, the Psalmist exclaims, ‘*Blessed is the man whose sin is covered*’ (Ps. xxxii. 1) ; and those interpreters seem to me to give too narrow a range of meaning to this ‘*white raiment*,’ who limit it to the graces of the Christian life, and the putting on, in this sense, of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. iii. 10-14). We should understand by it not merely the righteousness of Christ *imparted*, but also that righteousness *imputed* ; for both are needful, the one as needful as the other, if the shame of our nakedness is not to appear ; nor can they be separated the one from the other (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27) ; it is the being ‘*found in Him*’ (Phil. iii. 9), with all which this implies and involves’ (cf. Job xxix. 14 ; Isai. lxi. 10). So Vitringa : ‘*Vestimenta alba, h. e. justitiam Christi, verâ fide acceptam, quæ nos obtegit quâ parte nudi, id est, expositi sumus ardenti iræ Dei ; tum quoque habitus Christianarum virtutum, quæ faciunt ut quis cum fiduciâ absque pudore coram Deo et sanctis ausit comparere, inter quas eminent caritas, simplicitas, humilitas et zelus.*’

And then lastly—‘*anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*’ The eye for which this salve is needed is, of course, the spiritual eye, that eye of the conscience by which spiritual things are discerned and appre-

ciated; which eye may be sound or single (*ἀπλοῦς*, Matt. vi. 22), or contrariwise may be evil (*πονηρός*, Matt. vi. 23; cf. I John ii. 11); and according as it is one or the other, as it is enlightened (Ephes. i. 18) or darkened (Zech. xi. 17), the man will see himself as he truly is, or see nothing as he ought to see it. The beginning of all true amendment is to see ourselves as indeed we are, in our misery, our guilt, our shame; and the ability to do this is the first consequence of the anointing with that eyesalve which the Lord here invites this Angel to purchase of Him. The Spirit convinces of sin, and by this 'eyesalve' we must understand the illuminating grace of the Holy Ghost, which at once shows to us God, and in God and in his light ourselves. And if the eyesalves of antiquity commonly caused the eye to smart on their first application (Tob. xi. 8, 12), 'mordacia collyria,' 'acre collyrium,' as Augustine therefore calls them (*In Joh. Tract.* xviii. § 11; *Conf.* vii. 8), *δριμὺ κολλύριον*, as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, β 41, this will only set forth the more fitly to us the wholesome pain and medicinal smart which belong to the spiritual eyesalve as well; making for us discoveries so painful as it does, causing us to see in ourselves a nakedness and poverty which had been wholly concealed from us before; while yet only through the seeing and confessing of this can that poverty be ever exchanged for riches, or that nakedness for 'durable clothing.'

It has been already remarked, and assuredly it is very well worthy of notice, that the two Churches which spiritually have sunk the lowest, that, namely, of Sardis and this of Laodicea, are also the only two in which there are no traces either of adversaries from without, or of hinderers to the truth from within. Of the absence of heathen adversaries there was occasion to speak there;

but more noticeable still is the fact that neither there nor here are there Nicolaitans, as at Ephesus, nor Balaamites, as at Pergamum, nor Jezebelites, as at Thyatira, nor those who say they are Jews and are not, as at Smyrna and Philadelphia. We have notice of none of these seeking to seduce Christ's servants, and giving them no choice but earnestly to contend for the truth, if they would not be robbed of it altogether. From the lukewarmness and faintness of these Churches, from the indifference and lethargy into which they, who had no truth to secure or defend from gainsayers, were sunk, we may gather a pregnant hint of all which the Church owes to the heresies and heretics that, one after another, have disturbed her repose. Owing to them no thanks for what she has gained by them, the gains themselves have not the less been immense; even as St. Paul long before declared that she could not do without them (1 Cor. x. 19). There are remarkable acknowledgments to this same effect made in the heat of the great conflicts of early times by more than one of the Fathers; as by Augustine, *De Gen. con. Manich.* i. 1, and often. Tertullian, indeed, had anticipated him here (see *De Præsc. Hæret.* i. 4); and Origen (*Hom. 9 in Num.*). Contending against these gainsayers, she has learned not merely to define more precisely, but to grasp more firmly, and to prize more dearly, that truth of which they would fain have deprived her. What would the Church of the second century have been, if she had never learned her strength, and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which she had in Christ Jesus, in the course of that tremendous conflict with the Gnostics which through all that century she sustained? Would the Church herself have ever been the *true* Gnostic, except for these *false* ones? Again, what an education and disci-

pline for her were the fast-succeeding conflicts, Sabellian, Arian, Nestorian, Monophysite, Monothelite, of the centuries which followed; and not an intellectual education only, but 'as iron sharpeneth iron,' so the zeal of the adversaries of the truth served often to excite the zeal and love, which might else have abated, of her friends. Of Augustine himself Luther, though with some exaggeration, has said, that his controversy with the Pelagians 'first made a man of him' (*Table Talk*, c. 29). Assuredly it was not good for the Sardian and Laodicean Churches to be without this necessity of doing earnest battle for the truth. Perhaps they gloried in their freedom from conflicts which were agitating, disquieting, and shaking it may have been Churches around them. But we may be bold to say that in a world of imperfections like ours, it argued no healthy spiritual life that there were none there to call the truth into question and debate. Misgrowths are at any rate *growths*; and if there is a spiritual condition which is *above* errors (though hardly to be found in this present world), so also there is one which is *beneath* them; when all in a Church is dead 'as the fat weed that rots on Lethe's wharf,' when there is not interest enough in theology, not care enough to know anything certain about God, or about man's relation to God, even to generate a heresy. As we read the history of the Church, we may perhaps find some consolation in considerations such as these. Assuredly in reading many a page in that history we need the strongest consolations which anywhere we can find.

Ver. 19. '*As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.*'—Observe the use of *φιλεῖν* here, a tenderer word than *ἀγαπᾶν* would have been, which He employs in his address to Philadelphia (iii. 9). He

has wounded sharply, even as He meant to do; but will fain before He has done pour some soothing oil into the wounds which He has inflicted. Bengel says well: ‘Philadelphensem ἡγάπητε, Laodicensem φιλεῖ. Illud iudicio, hoc gratiâ;’ and compare my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 12. He, the great Master-builder, squares and polishes with many strokes of the chisel and the hammer the stones which shall find a place at last in the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Prov. iii. 12; xiii. 24; xxvii. 6; Ezek. xx. 37; Job v. 17; Acts xiv. 22; 1 Cor. xi. 32; Heb. xii. 6; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11–13; Ps. xciv. 12; Ecclus. xxx. 1; Wisd. iii. 4–6); on which Gregory the Great, with allusion to 1 Kin. vi. 7, has very beautifully said (*Reg. Past.* iii. 12): ‘Hinc est enim quod lapides extra tumsi sunt, ut in constructione templi Domini absque mallei sonitu ponerentur; quia videlicet nunc foris per flagella tundimur, ut intus in templum Dei postmodum sine disciplinæ percussione disponamur, quatenus quidquid in nobis est superfluum modo percussio reseceat, et tunc sola nos in ædificio concordia caritatis liget.’ And this is a rule which endures no exception. In that ‘*as many*’ (ὅσους) here lies the same emphasis as in the ‘*every son*’ of Heb. xii. 6. *All* whom He loves are included in the same discipline of correction, are made sooner or later to be able to say, ‘Thy loving correction shall make me great’ (Ps. xviii. 35). Of *all* it is true that, if not scourged, they are not sons (Heb. xii. 8; 2 Macc. vi. 12–16); if not rebuked and chastened, they are not loved. Others may be let alone (Ps. lxxiii. 5, 12; Isai. i. 5); but not they. Not a few, if their prosperity lasts a little longer than that of others, fancy that they shall be exceptions to this rule. But it never proves so. They can only be excepted from the discipline through being excepted from the sonship; as

Augustine excellently well (*Serm.* xlvi. § 11): ‘Flagellat, inquit, omnem filium quem recipit. Et tu forte exceptus eris? Si exceptus a passione flagellorum, exceptus a numero filiorum;’ and again (*Enarr. in Ps.* xxxii. 11): ‘Vis audire quam omnem? Etiam Unicus sine peccato, non tamen sine flagello.’ Many other beautiful passages to the same effect may be found in his writings; thus, *Enarr. in Ps.* xxxi. 11; xciii. 14; cxiv. 5. Jerome, too, very profoundly says (*in Ezek.* 9): ‘Magnæ interdum felicitatis est, ad præsens misericordiam non mereri.’

Ἐλέγχειν and παιδεύειν are often found together, as here; thus *Eclus.* xviii. 13; *Ps.* cxl. 5; so too παιδεία and ἔλεγχος, *Prov.* vi. 23; cf. *Heb.* xii. 5; but they are very capable of being distinguished. Ἐλέγχειν is more than ἐπιτιμᾶν, with which it is often joined (see my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 4; and J. H. H. Schmidt, *Synonymik d. Griech. Sprache*, p. 136 sqq.). It is so to rebuke that the person rebuked is brought to the acknowledgment of his fault, is *convinced*, as David was when rebuked by Nathan (2 *Sam.* xii. 13); for, in the words of Aristotle (*Rhet. ad Alex.* 13), ἔλεγχός ἐστι μὲν ὁ μὴ δυνατὸν ἄλλως ἔχειν, ἀλλ’ οὕτως ὡς ἡμεῖς λέγομεν: and this rebuking, or convincing of sin, is eminently the work and office of the Holy Ghost (*John* xvi. 8; cf. *iii.* 20; *Ephes.* v. 13). See upon this subject an admirable note by Archdeacon Hare, *Mission of the Comforter*, vol. ii. p. 528. Παιδεύειν, being in classical Greek to instruct, to educate, is in sacred Greek to instruct or educate *by means of correction*, through the severe discipline of love (παιδεύειν and μαστιγοῦν are joined together, *Heb.* xii. 6), ‘*per molestias erudire*’ (*Lev.* xxvi. 18; 1 *Kin.* xii. 11; *Ps.* xxxvii. 1); as Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps.* cxviii. 66), tracing the difference between its sacred and profane uses,

explains it. As David had found his ἔλεγχος when he exclaimed, 'I have sinned against the Lord' (2 Sam. xii. 13), so his παιδεία was announced to him in the words which followed: 'The child also that is born unto thee shall surely die' (ver. 14)—which passage is alone sufficient to refute those who affirm that we have in this ἐλέγχο καὶ παιδεύω here a ὕστερον πρότερον. Not so. It will indeed continually happen that the same dealing of God with men is at once ἔλεγχος and παιδεία, but only παιδεία through having been ἔλεγχος first; which therefore rightly precedes. Brightman: 'Observandum est illum arguere et castigare; id est, convincere et plectere. Simul enim sunt hæc duo conjungenda. Inutilis est animadversio, ubi verba silent, verbera sæviunt. Unde recte vocatur castigatio, disciplina quâ delinquens una dolet et discit.'—For ζήλωσον of the received text, read rather ζηλεῦε, from ζηλεύω, another form of ζηλόω. This word, through ζήλος connected with ζέω and thus with ζεστός (ver. 15), is chosen as the word of exhortation, with special reference to the lukewarmness which the Lord so indignantly saw in the Laodicean Church. It was warmth, heat, fervency, which He required there. St. Paul uses ζηλοῦν in a good sense, Gal. iv. 18; 1 Cor. xii. 31; xiv. 1; which passages are the best parallels to its employment here.

Ver. 20. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'—The Hellenistic κρούειν is here, as always in the New Testament, the word used to describe this knocking at the door (Luke xii. 36; xiii. 25; Acts. xii. 13, 16). The Greek purists preferred κόπτειν; yet see Lobeck, *Phrygischus*, p. 177. These gracious words declare the long-suffering of Christ, as He waits for the conversion of sinners (1 Pet. iii. 20); and not alone the long-suffering which waits,

but the love which seeks to bring that conversion about, which ‘knocks.’ He at whose door we ought to stand, for He *is* the Door (John x. 7), who, as such, has bidden *us* to knock (Matt. vii. 7; Luke xi. 9), is content that the whole relation between Him and us should be reversed, and instead of our standing at his door, condescends Himself to stand at ours,—*θυραυλεῖν*, as the Greeks called this waiting and watching at the door of the beloved. Very beautiful on the matter of this infinite condescension on his part are the words of Nicolaus Cabasilas, a Greek mystic of the fourteenth century: ὁ περὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἔρως τὸν Θεὸν ἐκένωσεν. οὐ γὰρ κατὰ χώραν μένων καλεῖ πρὸς ἑαυτόν, ὃν ἐφίλησε δοῦλον, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς ζητεῖ κατελθόν, καὶ πρὸς τὴν καταγωγὴν ἀφικνεῖται τοῦ πένητος ὁ πλουτῶν, καὶ προσελθὼν δι’ ἑαυτοῦ μνηύει τὸν πόθον, καὶ ζητεῖ τὸ ἴσον, καὶ ἀπαξιούντος οὐκ ἀφίσταται, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ὕβριν οὐ δυσχεραίνει, καὶ διωκόμενος προσεδρεύει ταῖς θύραις, καὶ ἵνα τὸν ἐρῶντα δείξῃ, πάντα ποιεῖ, καὶ ὀδυνώμενος φέρει καὶ ἀποθνήσκει.

‘If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.’

—Christ does not knock only; He also speaks; makes his ‘voice’ to be heard—a more precious benefit still! It is true, indeed, that we cannot in our interpretation draw any strict line of distinction between Christ knocking and Christ speaking. Both represent his dealings of infinite love with souls, for the winning them to receive Him; yet at the same time, considering that in this natural world a knock may be any one’s, and on any errand, while the voice accompanying that knock would at once designate who it was that stood without, and with what intention (Acts xii. 13, 14), we have a right, so far as we may venture to distinguish between the two, to see in the voice

the more inward appeal, the closer dealing of Christ with the soul, speaking directly by his Spirit to the spirit of the man; in the knocking those more outward gracious dealings, of sorrow and joy, of sickness and health, and the like, which He sends, and sending uses for the bringing of his elect, in one way or another, by smooth paths or by rough, to Himself. The 'voice' very often will interpret and make intelligible the purpose of the 'knock.'

It is true that the one and the other may alike remain unheard and unheeded. It is in the power of every man to close his ear to them; therefore the hypothetical form which this gracious promise takes: '*if any man hear my voice, and open the door.*' There is no *gratia irresistibilis* here. It is the man himself who must open the door. Christ indeed knocks, claims admittance as to his own; so lifts up his voice that it may be heard, in one sense *must* be heard, by him; but He does not break open the door, or force an entrance by violence. There is a sense in which every man is lord of the house of his own heart; it is his fortress; he must open the gates of it, and unless he does so, Christ cannot enter. And, as a necessary complement of this power to open, there belongs also to man the mournful prerogative and privilege of refusing to open: he may keep the door shut, even to the end. He may thus continue to the last blindly at strife with his own blessedness; a miserable conqueror, who conquers to his own everlasting loss and defeat.

At the same time, these words of Christ, decisive testimony as they yield against that scheme of irresistible grace which would turn men into mere machines, and take away all moral value from the victories which Christ obtains over the sullenness, the pride, the obstinacy, the rebellion of men, must not be pushed, as some have pushed them,

in the other direction, into Pelagian error and excess. This is done when the words are taken to affirm that men can open the door of their heart when they will, as though repentance was not itself a gift of the exalted Saviour (Acts v. 31); when it is forgotten that the words of the Holy Ghost, Acts xvi. 14, 'whose heart the Lord opened,' must stand true as well as these. Men can only open when Christ knocks; and they would have no desire at all to open unless He knocked, and unless, together with the external knocking of the Word, or of sorrow, or of pain, or whatever other shape it might assume, there went also the inward voice of the Spirit. All which one would affirm is that this is a *drawing*, not a *dragging*—a knocking at the door, not a breaking open of the door. Hilary has some words very much to the point here (*In Ps.* cxviii. 89): 'Vult ergo semper introire; sed a nobis ne introeat excluditur. Ipse quidem semper ut illuminet promptus est; sed lumen sibi domus ipsa obseratis aditibus excludit. Quæ si cœperit patere, illico introibit, modo solis, qui clausis fenestræ valvis introire prohibetur, patentibus vero totus immittitur. Est enim Verbum Dei Sol justitiæ, adsistens unicuique ut introeat, nec moratur lucem suam repertis aditibus infundere.'

Some, wishing to deprive the *Song of Songs* of its honourable place in the Canon, and to reduce it to the level of a mere human love-poem, the idyl of an earthly love, have affirmed that there is no single allusion to it in the New Testament. This assertion is wholly without warrant. In the words we have been just considering there is an undoubted allusion to Cant. v. 2-6; where, indeed, the very language which Christ uses here, the *κρούειν ἐπὶ τῆν θύραν*, the summons *ἀνοίγειν* recurs. Nor is the relation between the one passage and the other merely

superficial and verbal. On the contrary, it lies very deep. The spiritual condition of the Bride there is in fact precisely similar to that of the Laodicean Angel here. Between sleeping and waking she has been so slow to open the door, that when at length she does so, the Bridegroom has withdrawn, and she has need to seek for and to follow Him (ver. 5, 6). This exactly corresponds to the lukewarmness of the Angel here. See the two passages brought into closest connexion in this sense by Jerome, *Ep.* xviii. *ad Eustochium*. Another proof of the connexion between them is this,—that although there has been no mention of anything but a knocking here, Christ goes on to say, ‘*If any man hear my voice.*’ What can this be but an allusion to the words in the *Canticle* which have just gone before, ‘*It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister*’? In the face of this, and much more of the same kind which might be adduced, Ewald asserts, ‘*Cantico nunquam utuntur scriptores Novi Testamenti;*’ and rather than look there for this ‘*Behold, I stand at the door and knock,*’ he prefers to find allusion here to Peter’s standing and knocking at the door of Mary’s house after he was released from prison by the Angel (Acts xii. 13, 14)! We need not go far before we find further evidence of the intimate relation between these words of Christ and those of the Bridegroom in that Book. We trace it in the words which almost immediately follow: ‘*and will sup with him, and he with Me.*’ There may possibly be in these a more immediate reference to Luke xii. 36; but that to the *Song of Songs*, because it lies deeper, must not therefore be overlooked. There too the mutual feasting of Christ with the soul which opens to Him, and of the soul with Him, is all set forth. There too the bride prepares a feast for her Beloved: ‘*Let my*

Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits' (iv. 16); but He had first prepared one for her: 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste' (ii. 3). Few, I suppose, would be disposed to deny a mystical significance to that meal after the Resurrection on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, recorded with so much emphasis by the beloved disciple (John xxi. 9-13); which wonderfully fulfils the same conditions, being made up of what the disciples bring and what Christ brings. This mutual feasting of Christ with his people, and of his people with Him, finds in this present life its culminating fulfilment in the Holy Eucharist; which yet is but an initial fulfilment; it will only find its exhaustive accomplishment in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7-9; Mark xiv. 25).

Ver. 21. '*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne.*'—A magnificent variation of Christ's words spoken in the days of his flesh: 'The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them. . . . Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am' (John xvii. 22, 24); as also of the words of St. Paul, 'If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him' (2 Tim. ii. 12). Wonderful indeed is this promise, which, being the last and the crowning, is also the highest and most glorious of all. Step by step they have advanced, till a height is reached than which no higher can be conceived. It seemed much to promise the Apostles themselves that they should sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. xix. 28); but here is promised to every believer something more than was there promised to the elect Twelve. And more wonderful still, if we consider to whom this promise is here addressed. He whom Christ threatened just now to reject with loathing out of

his mouth, is offered a place with Him on his throne. But indeed so it is; the highest place is within reach of the lowest; the faintest spark of grace may be fanned into the mightiest flame of divine love. It will be observed that the image here is not that of sitting upon seats on the right hand or on the left of Christ's throne (1 Kin. ii. 19), but of sharing that throne itself. To understand this, we must keep in mind the fact, that the Eastern throne is much ampler and broader than ours; rather a sofa than a chair; so that there would be room upon it for other persons, besides him who occupied as of right the central position there (Matt. xx. 21). Witsius: 'Erudite observavit Ludovicus de Dieu thronum regis apud orientales amplum et latum esse, lecticæ instar, fulcris aliquantulum supra terram evectum, ac tapetibus ornatum, adeo ut præter sedem regi propriam, alii quoque quos honore afficere cupit rex, in eodem throno sedes habere queant.'

'Even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.'—The Son is *σύνθρονος* with the Father (Wisd. ix. 4; cf. Rev. xxii. 1, 'the throne of God and the Lamb'); as the early Church writers loved to express it, with a word employed already in the heathen mythology, perhaps borrowed from it (see Suicer, *Thes.* s. v.); his faithful people shall be *πάρεδροι* with Him. These words, '*I overcame*,' remind us of other words spoken by the Lord while as yet He had not so visibly overcome as now: 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John xvi. 33); and the manner in which the overcoming of the world and the sitting down with his Father in his throne are brought together here, puts this passage in close connexion with Phil. ii. 9: '*Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name;' cf. Heb. i. 3.—On this '*my throne*,'

and '*my Father's throne*,' Mede says well (*Works*, p. 905): 'Here are two thrones mentioned. *My throne*, saith Christ; this is the condition of glorified saints who sit with Christ in his throne; but *my Father's* (*i.e.* God's) *throne* is the power of Divine majesty; on this throne none may sit but God, and the God-man Jesus Christ. To be installed in God's throne, to sit at God's right hand, is to have a god-like royalty, such as his Father hath, a royalty altogether incommunicable, whereof no creature is capable.'

Ver. 22. '*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*'—Compare ii. 7.

A few words in conclusion upon the order in which the promises of the seven Epistles succeed one another. It is impossible not to acknowledge such an order here,—an order parallel to that of the unfolding of the kingdom of God from its first beginnings on earth to its glorious consummation in heaven. Thus the promise of Christ to the faithful at Ephesus is, '*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of my God*' (ii. 7); thus taking us back to Genesis i. ii. But sin presently entered into Paradise, and death, the seal and witness of sin (Gen. iii. 19); while yet for the faithful at Smyrna,—and the promise that is good for them is good for the faithful everywhere,—this curse of death is lightened. It shall be to them but the gate of immortality, for '*he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death*' (ii. 11). The next promise, that to the faithful at Pergamum, brings us to the Mosaic period, to the Church in the wilderness: '*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna*' (ii. 17); and if the interpretation of the '*white stone*' which has been ventured here

is the right one, that promise will also fall in perfectly with the wilderness period and the institution of the high-priesthood, which at that period found place. In the fourth, that namely to Thyatira, we have reached the full and final consummation, in type and prophetic outline, of the kingdom, the period of David and Solomon,—the triumph over the nations, the Church sharing in the royalties of her King (ii. 26, 27). Every reader will recognize this as a characteristic feature of those reigns (2 Sam. viii. 1-13; x. 19; xii. 29, 30; 1 Chron. xvii. 1-13).

Here there is a pause; and with this consummation reached, than which in type and prophecy there can be nothing higher, a new series begins; the heptad falling, as is so constantly the case, into two groups; either of three and four, as in the Lord's Prayer, or of four and three, as in the parables of Mt. xiii., and as here. And now the scenery, if I may use the word, shifts and changes; it is not any longer of earth, but of heaven. The kingdom, not of David, but of David's greater Son, has come; all his foes are under his feet; his Church is not any longer contemplated as militant, but triumphant; and in the succession of the three concluding promises we learn that even for the Church triumphant there are steps and advances from glory to glory. Thus, in the promise addressed to the Angel of Sardis, we have the blessings of the judgment-day, the name found written in the book of life, Christ's confession of his own before his Father, the vesture of light and immortality, in other words, the glorified body which it shall be then given to the saints to wear (iii. 5). This, however, is a personal, a solitary benefit, belonging to each of them alone; not so the next. In the promise made to the faithful at Philadelphia, it is declared that as many as overcome shall have right to enter by the gates

into the heavenly City, where City and Temple are one, shall be themselves avouched members of that heavenly *πολιτεία*, and shall have their place in it for evermore (iii. 12). And then, it having thus been declared what they have in themselves, namely, the glorified body, and what they have in and with the company of the redeemed, the citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem, it is, last of all, in the concluding words to the Angel of Laodicea, declared what they possess with God and with Christ; that it shall be granted to them to sit down with Christ on his throne, as He has sat down with his Father in his Father's throne (iii. 21). There can be nothing behind and beyond this; and with this therefore is the close; in Herder's words, 'Die Kränze werden immer höher und schöner; hier *hängt* der höchste und schönste.' It is here, to compare divine things with human, as in the *Paradiso* of Dante. There, too, there are different circles of light around the throne, each, as it is nearer to the throne, of an intenser brightness than that beyond it and more remote, till at last, when all the others have been passed, the throne itself is reached, and the very Presence of Him who sits upon the throne, and from whom all this light and all this glory flows.¹

¹ Tertullian gathers up the promises in a few pregnant words (*Scorp.* 12): 'Victori cuique promittit nunc arborem vitæ, et mortis veniam secundæ; nunc latens manna cum calculo candido et nomine ignoto; nunc ferreæ virgæ potestatem et stellæ matutinæ claritatem; nunc albam vestiri, nec deleri de libro vitæ, et columnam fieri in Dei templo in nomine Dei et Domini, et Jerusalem cælestis inscripta, nunc residere cum Domino in throno ejus, quod aliquando Zebedæi filiis negabatur' (Mt. xx. 23).

EXCURSUS

ON THE HISTORICO-PROPHETICAL INTERPRETATION OF
THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA.

‘Mali moris est sensum in S. Scripturam inferre, non efferre.’

THE large space which any adequate treatment of the historico-prophetical interpretation of these Epistles would demand has made it necessary to withdraw the consideration of this subject from the Exposition itself; and I have therefore reserved this for an *Excursus* at the end of the volume, which I proceed to devote to it alone.

It is, doubtless, familiar to as many as have at all studied the history of the exposition of these seven Epistles, that a large body of interpreters, several of these distinguished for their piety and their learning, have not been content to take them merely for what they seem to announce themselves to be, namely, seven ‘words’ of instruction, warning, consolation, addressed by the great ascended Shepherd and Bishop of souls to seven Churches of Asia; but have loudly proclaimed that these Epistles have a much wider outlook than this, that they contain far deeper mysteries than any which such an estimate of them as this would imply. Those who affirm this, have doubtless a full right to be heard. In the Scripture are such depths of meaning, so much remains to be discovered in them, in addition to all which has already been discovered, their wealth is so inexhaustible, that any one,

whose incapacity is not patent, may rightly claim from us a patient and attentive hearing, when he offers to lead us into these depths, to show us that, where *we* thought there were but golden harvests, the food of all, waving upon the surface, there are also veins of richest metal below, the wealth of those who will be at the pains to dig for and search out these hid treasures. And yet, at the same time, before we admit any such discoveries of treasures hid in the field of Scripture, it will be good always to remember, that there is a temptation to make Scripture mean *more* than in the intention of the Author of it, the Holy Ghost, it does mean, as well as a temptation to make it mean *less*; and that we are bound by equally solemn obligations not to thrust on it something of ours, as not to subtract from it anything of its own (Rev. xxii. 18, 19); the interpretation *in excess* proving often nearly, or quite, as mischievous as that *in defect*; while yet the temptations to it are not few, though it would lead us too far from our immediate theme, if we attempted to trace them here.

But what, it may be asked, is this wider horizon, which, if we would meet the Divine intention, it is declared to us we should ascribe to these Epistles, and what the deeper mysteries which they contain? Before I attempt to answer this, let me first, by way of clearing the ground, set down those points on which *all* are agreed, upon which there is no dispute; and then secondly, that which, if not all, yet the greater number of competent judges would admit; that so, this done, and these matters of universal or general agreement separated off, we may more clearly present to ourselves what are the precise points on which the controversy turns.

All, then, are agreed that these seven Epistles, how-

ever primarily addressed to these seven Churches of Asia, were also written for the edification of the Universal Church; in the same way, that is, as St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, or to Timothy, or St. James' to the Dispersion, were written with this intention. The warnings, the incentives, the promises, the consolations, and, generally, the whole instruction in righteousness in these contained, are for every one in all times, so far as they may meet the several cases and conditions of men; what Christ says to those here addressed He says to all in similar conditions. Thus far there can be no question. 'All Scripture,' and therefore this Scripture, was 'written for our learning.'

It may fail to meet with acceptance as universal, yet will, I suppose, be further admitted by many thoughtful students of God's Word, probably by most who have entered into the mystery of the heptad in Scripture (see p. 59), that these seven Churches of Asia are not an accidental aggregation, which might just as fitly have been eight, or six, or any other number. They will acknowledge, on the contrary, a fitness in this number, and that these seven do in some sort represent the Universal Church; that we have a right to contemplate them as offering to us the leading aspects, moral and spiritual, which Churches gathered in the name of Christ out of the world will assume. No one, of course, affirming this, would mean that they could be contemplated as exhaustive of these aspects; for the infinite depth and richness of that new life which Christ brought into the world testifies itself in nothing more than in this, the rich variety of forms which this new life of his, embodying itself in the lives of men, will assume, the very malformations themselves witnessing in their own way for the fulness of this life. But

though not exhaustive (for what could be this?), they give us on a smaller scale, *ὡς ἐν τύπῳ*, the grander and more recurring features of that life; are not fragmentary, fortuitously strung together; but have a completeness, a many-sidedness; being, as we may well believe, selected on this very account; here, perhaps, being the reason why Philadelphia is included and Miletus passed by; Thyatira, outwardly so insignificant, chosen, when one might have beforehand far sooner expected Magnesia or Tralles. Thus what notable contrasts do these seven offer,—a Church face to face with danger and death (Smyrna), and a Church at ease, settling down upon its lees (Sardis); a Church with abundant means and loud profession, yet doing little or nothing for the furtherance of the truth (Laodicea), and a Church with little strength and small opportunities, yet accomplishing a mighty work for Christ (Philadelphia); a Church intolerant of doctrinal error, yet too much lacking that love towards its Lord for which nothing else is a substitute (Ephesus); and over against this a Church not careful nor zealous, as it ought to be, for doctrinal purity, but diligent in works and ministries of love (Thyatira); or, to review these same Churches from another point of view, a Church in conflict with heathen libertinism, the sinful freedom of the flesh (Ephesus), and a Church or Churches in conflict with Jewish superstition, the sinful bondage of the spirit (Pergamum, Philadelphia); or, for the indolence of man a more perilous case than either, Churches with no vigorous forms of opposition to the truth in the midst of them, to brace their energies and to cause them, in the act of defending the imperilled truth, to know it better and to love it more (Sardis, Laodicea). That these Churches are more or less *representative* Churches, having been selected because they are

so; that they form a complex within and among themselves, mutually fulfilling and completing one another; that the great Head of the Church contemplates them for the time being as symbolic of his Universal Church, implying as much in that mystic seven, and giving many other indications of the same,—this also will be accepted, if not by all, yet by many.

But the Periodists, as they have been called, the upholders of what may be fitly termed the historico-prophetical scheme of interpretation, are by no means satisfied with these admissions. They demand that we should recognize in these Epistles very much more than this. They affirm that we have in them, besides counsels to the Churches named in each, a prophetic outline of seven successive *periods* of the Church's history; dividing, as they do, into those seven portions the whole time intervening between Christ's Ascension and his return in glory. As in making a statement for others, above all for those from whom one is about to dissent, it is always fairest, or, at all events, most satisfactory, to cite their own words, I will here quote two passages, one from Joseph Mede, another from Vitringa, in which these severally set forth that historico-prophetical scheme; which they both favoured and upheld; and certainly the statement of the case could scarcely be in discreeter or in abler hands. The modesty with which the former propounds it is in striking contrast with the arrogant confidence of some others, who were well nigh disposed to make here a new article of faith, and the acceptance or rejection of this interpretation a test of orthodoxy. These are Mede's words; they occur in one of his sermons (*Works*, 1672, p. 296): 'It belongs not much to our purpose to inquire whether those seven Epistles concern historically and literally only the Churches

here named, or whether they were intended for types or ages of the Church afterwards to come. It shall be sufficient to say, that if we consider their number, being seven (which is a number of revolution of times, and therefore in this Book the seals, trumpets, and vials also are seven); or if we consider the choice of the Holy Ghost, in that He taketh neither all, no, nor the most famous Churches then in the world, as Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, and many other, and such, no doubt, as had need of instruction as well as those here named; if these things be well considered, it will seem that these seven Churches, besides their literal respect, were intended (and it may be chiefly) to be as patterns and types of the several ages of the Catholic Church from the beginning thereof unto the end of the world; that so these seven Churches should prophetically sample unto us a sevenfold temper and constitution of the whole Church according to the several ages thereof, answering the pattern of the Churches named here; compare some other words of his to the same effect, p. 905. Vitringa (*Anacrisis Apocalypsi*os, p. 32), moving on the same lines, expresses himself thus: ‘Omnino igitur existimo Spiritum S. sub typo et emblemate septem Ecclesiarum Asiæ nobis mystice et prophetice voluisse depingere septem variantes status Ecclesiæ Christianæ, quibus successive conspiceretur usque ad adventum Domini et omnium rerum finem, phrasibus desumptis a nominibus, conditione et attributis ipsarum illarum Ecclesiarum Asiæ nobiliorum, quæ ad hunc usum et scopum sapienter adhibuit; sic tamen ut ipsæ illæ Ecclesiæ Asianæ simul in hoc speculo se ipsas videre, suasque tam virtutes quam vitia ex illis epistolis cognoscere, et quæ in iis sunt admonitiones et exhortationes ad se ipsas quoque referre et applicare possent: quippe quod

summa suadet jubetque ratio. Quod enim alterius rei typum et figuram sustinebit symbolicam, ita affectum esse oportet ut attributa subjecti analogi in ipsâ illâ re figurante omnium primo demonstrari possint.'

I have cited these two writers of a later age; but the scheme itself, in one shape or another, may be traced to a much earlier date; though, indeed, it is very far from being as old as some of its favourers would have us to believe, claiming, as not seldom they do, several of the early Fathers, as early at least as Augustine and Chrysostom, for the first authors and upholders of it. There is no warrant for this. No passage has been quoted, and I am convinced none could be quoted, bearing out this claim of theirs. In an eager debate carried on for the larger part of a century, the opponents of this interpretation repeatedly challenged the advocates to bring forward a single quotation from one Father, Greek or Latin, in its support. None such was ever produced; so that Witsius has perfect right when he affirms, 'Nullibi id dicunt [antiqui] quod viri isti eruditi volunt, quibuscum hæc nobis instituta disputatio est; nimirum proprie, literaliter atque ex intentione Spiritûs Sancti verbis harum Epistolarum delineari, non quod Johannis tempore in Asiæ Ecclesiis agebatur, sed quod in universali Ecclesiâ septem temporum periodis ordine succedentibus futurum erat. Id non liquet antiquorum ulli vel in mentem venisse.' This quotation is from his essay, *De Septem Eccles. Apocalyp. Sensu Historico an Prophetico* (*Opp.* vol. i. pp. 640-741), remarkable for the moderation of its tone and the fairness with which all that can be said on the other side is weighed. It is quite true that Augustine, with others before and after him, acknowledged that symbolic representative character of these Epistles, whereof I just

now spoke. Thus Andreas, the earliest commentator on the Apocalypse whose work has reached us, gives this as the reason why the Lord, through St. John, addressed Himself exactly to seven Churches; *διὰ τοῦ ἐβδοματικῆς ἀριθμοῦ τὸ μυστικὸν τῶν ἀπανταχῆ ἐκκλησιῶν σημαίνων.* Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, xvii. 4), explaining the Canticle of Hannah, in which it is said, ‘The barren hath born seven’ (1 Sam. ii. 5), goes on to say, ‘Hic totum quod prophetabatur eluxit agnoscentibus numerum septenarium quo est universa Ecclesiæ significata perfectio. Propter quod et Johannes Apostolus ad septem scribit Ecclesias, eo modo se ostendens ad unius plenitudinem scribere;’ or, as the last clause of a similar statement reads elsewhere (*Exp. in Gal.* ii. 7): ‘quæ [Ecclesiæ] utique universalis Ecclesiæ personam gerunt;’ cf. *Ep.* xlix. § 2. And Gregory the Great almost word for word (*Moral.* xvii. 27): ‘Unde et septem Ecclesiis scribit Johannes Apostolus, ut unam Catholicam, septiformis gratiæ plenam Spiritu designaret;’ cf. *Præf.* c. 8. But to accept them as historico-prophetic is quite a different matter, and of any allowance of this there is no vestige among them; no evidence that it had ever so much as come into their minds.

Still the notion itself undoubtedly dates back to a period anterior to the Reformation. The *Fratres Spirituales*, or more rigid Franciscans, who refused the mitigations of the severity of St. Francis’ rule, in which the majority of his followers allowed themselves, and who on this account separated themselves from their laxer brethren, and from the Church which sanctioned such relaxations, are the first among whom this scheme of interpretation assumed any prominence. It is familiar to as many as are at all acquainted with this wonderful body of men, what an important part the distribution of the

Church's history into seven ages played in their theology, and what weapons they contrived to find in this armoury for the assault of the dominant Church and hierarchy of Rome. Looking everywhere in Scripture for traces of these seven times, it is not strange that they should have found such in these seven Epistles. At the time of the first rise of these, one but recently dead, high in reputation for sanctity throughout the Church, himself regarded as little less of an apocalyptic seer, I mean the Abbot Joachim of Floris (he died in 1202), had already shown the way in this interpretation ;¹ and the Spiritualist Brethren did not fail to adjust the seven ages of the Church and the seven Epistles prophetic of them, so that these should prophesy all good of themselves, and all evil of Rome.

It is evident that when the scheme was adopted two or three centuries later by theologians of the Reformed Church, it would require readjustment and redistribution throughout, and this at once chronological and dogmatic. Such readjustment it was not difficult to effect. The whole thing was a subjective fancy of men's minds, not an objective truth of God's Word, and would therefore oppose no serious resistance. It was easy to give it whatever new shape was required by the new conditions under which it should now appear. After the Reformation, the first in whom I meet this interpretation of the Epistles to the seven Churches as predictive of the seven ages of the Church and foreshadowing their condition, is an English divine, Thomas Brightman (b. 1557, d. 1607). I feel quite sure that it had earlier advocates, but I have not traced it

¹ For an account of Joachim of Floris' seven ages, see Hahn, *Gesch. d. Ketzer im Mittelalter*, vol. iii. p. 112; Engelhardt, *Kirch. Gesch. Abhandlungen*, p. 107. For English readers there is an excellent summary of what they taught and did in Elliot's *Apocalypse*.

higher up. Brightman belonged to the Puritan school of divines, as they existed within the bosom of the Anglican Church, and though in opposition to its spirit, not as yet visibly separated from it. At the same time his work, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos*, 1612, avouches him a man of no ordinary gifts, and of warm and earnest piety; so that Marekius has perfect right when he says of it, ‘eruditionem et pietatem non vulgarem spirat.’ But although he, and Joseph Mede, as we have seen (he died in 1638), and Henry More,¹ lent to this suggestion the authority of their names, it never seems to have struck any vigorous root in England, nor to have awakened interest enough to make men very earnest either in its assertion or its denial. It was in the Reformed Churches of Holland and Germany, but predominantly in the former, that this periodic interpretation first assumed any prominence or importance. There indeed, during the middle and latter part of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth, it was debated with animation, and often with something more than animation. The very able *Prefatio de Septem Novi Testamenti Periodis*, which Marekius has prefixed to his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 1699, shows how angry the disputants could be on one side and the other.

The theologian who by his adoption of the historico-prophetical interpretation gave an importance to it, and procured for it an acceptance, which in any other way it would scarcely have obtained, was Cocceius (b. 1603, d. 1669). It is indeed with him only part of a larger whole—one among many testimonies for a divinely-

¹ *Prophetical Exposition of the Seven Epistles sent to the Seven Churches in Asia from Him that is, and was, and is to come*,—*Theological Works*, London, 1708, pp. 719-764; first published in 1669.

intended division into seven periods of the whole history of the Church. This division found favour with many ; but in no one does it recur with so great a frequency, exercise so powerful an influence on his interpretation of Scripture, constitute so vital a portion of his theology, as in him. I am not aware whether Cocceius at any time made himself at all felt in England ; his reputation, if it ever reached us here, has now quite passed away ; but his influence for good on the Protestant communities of Holland and also of Germany, as a promoter of a Biblical in place of a scholastical theology, leading as he did those Churches from the arid wastes of a new scholasticism to the living fountains of the Word of God, was immense, and survives to the present hour. But this distribution of the Church's history into periods of seven, seven before Christ's coming, and seven after, is a sort of 'fixed idea' with him. It is indeed his desire to make Scripture the rule in everything, and to find all that concerns the spiritual life and development of man cast in a scriptural framework, this desire 'in season and out of season,' which has led him astray. And thus it is that he finds, or where he does not find he makes, everywhere in Scripture a prophecy of these periods ; in the seven days of creation, in the seven beatitudes, in the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, in the seven parables of Matthew xiii. ; not seldom forcing into artificial arrangement by sevens, Scriptures which yield themselves not naturally and of their own accord, but only under violent pressure and constraint, to any articulation of the kind, as Hannah's Prayer, the Song of Moses, of Deborah, the Song of Songs, not a few of the Psalms, and, I dare say, much else in Scripture besides.¹

¹ Let me rescue from vast unread folios of his, as not very alien to the matter we have in hand, one noble passage, and he abounds

But despite of all the excesses of his interpretation, Cocceius never refused to these Epistles a true historical foundation. The historico-prophetic meaning was no doubt far the most precious in his eyes; and it had good right so to be, if only it had been designed by the Spirit; but he did not deny that there had been actual Churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, and the rest, to which these several Epistles were primarily addressed, and to whose moral and spiritual condition they, at the time they were written, fitted. Others, however, have proceeded to far more serious lengths. They have refused to see any reference whatever to Churches actually, at the time when this vision was seen, subsisting in these cities of Asia, and to their spiritual condition. These they regard merely as the vehicles for the conveyance of the prophecy; the seven Epistles not in the least expressing, except, it might be, here and there by accidental and undesigned coincidence, the actual condition of these seven Churches. Despite of anything which these Epistles may seem to affirm to the contrary, the Church of Ephesus, according to their view, may at this time have been tolerant of false teachers, and Thyatira intolerant; Philadelphia may have been slack in

in such, on the analogy of faith, and the help which the different portions of Scripture mutually afford to the right understanding of one another. It is from the *Præfatio ad Comm. in Proph. Min., Opp.* tom. v., without pagination: ‘Habet enim divina institutio Scripturæ instar augusti palatii, in quo ordine consideant innumeri seniores, qui viritum admissum novum discipulum erudiant, a collegis suis dicta confirmant, roborent, explicent, illustrent, nunc fusius dicta contrahant, nunc contractiora diffundant et diducant, generalius dicta distinguant, distincta generatim innuant, regulas exemplis fulciant, exempla in regulis judicent, ita ut omnium de eâdem re agentium dictorum is sensus accipi debeat, qui est ullius, et qui nulli refragetur, et plena institutio ea demum censerî quæ omnium virorum Dei sit vox, συμφωνία, et ὁμόνοια.’

deeds of faith and love, and Laodicea fervent in spirit, and Sardis with not a few only, but many names, that had not defiled their garments. No Antipas need have actually resisted to blood at Pergamum; there may have been no tribulation of ten days imminent upon Smyrna.¹

This extravagance may be dismissed in a few words. Origen is justly condemned, that, advancing a step beyond other allegorists, who *slighted* the facts of the Old Testament history for the sake of mystical meanings which they believed to lie behind them, he denied, concerning many events recorded there as historical, that they actually happened at all; rearing the superstructure of his mystical meaning, not on the establishment of the literal sense, but on its ruins. Every reverent student of the Word of God must feel that so he often lets go a substance in snatching at a shadow, that shadow itself really eluding his grasp after all. He who in this sense assails the strong historic substructures of Scripture, may not know all which he is doing; but he is indeed doing his best, or his worst rather, to turn the glorious superstructure built on these, which, though resting on earth, pierces heaven, into a mere sky-pageant painted on the air, a cloud-palace waiting to be shifted and changed by every breath of the caprice of man, and at length fading and melting into common air. It was not without reason that Augustine, himself not wholly to be acquitted of excesses in this direction, did yet urge so strongly the necessity of maintaining, before and above all, the historic letter of the Scripture, whatever else to this might be superadded (*Serm. ii. 6*): ‘Ante omnia, fratres, hoc in nomine Domini et admonemus quantum

¹ Floerke, in an able work on the Millennium, *Lehre vom tausend-jährigen Reiche*, Marburg, 1859, is the latest denier *in toto* of an historical element in these Epistles; see p. 59, sqq.

possumus et præcipimus, ut quando auditis exponi sacramentum Scripturæ narrantis quæ gesta sunt, prius illud quod lectum est credatur sic gestum quomodo lectum est, ne subtracto fundamento rei gestæ, quasi in aëre quæeratis ædificare.’ Similar warnings in his writings continually recur. Who indeed could remain confident that anything presented in Scripture as history, with all apparent notes of history about it, was yet history at all, and not something wholly different,—parable, or allegory, or prophecy,—if these Epistles, which St. John is bidden to send to the seven Churches in Asia, which profess to enter minutely into their spiritual condition, were yet never sent to them at all, had no relation whatever to them, no more, I mean, than to any other portion of the universal Church?

But leaving these, and addressing ourselves only to the more moderate upholders of the periodic scheme of interpretation, to those, namely, who admit a literal and present sense, while they superinduce upon it a prophetic and future, we ask, what slightest hint or intimation does the Spirit of God give that we have here to do with the great successive acts and epochs of the kingdom of God in the course of its gradual evolution here upon earth? Where are the finger-posts pointing this way? What is there, for instance, of chronological succession? Does not everything, on the contrary, indicate *simultaneity*, and not *succession*? The seven candlesticks are seen at the same instant; the seven Churches named in the same breath. How different is it where succession *in time* is really intended; how impossible then not to perceive it; see, for instance, Dan. ii. 32, 33, 39, 40; vii. 6, 7, 9. On this matter Marcius says very well (*Præf.* § 52): ‘Attamen ut Ecclesias has agnoscamus pro typicis, sive significantibus ex Dei intentione alias Ecclesias aliorum locorum et

temporum, oportet nos a Deo doceri. Typus enim, non magis quam allegorias, pro lubitu nostro in Scripturam inferre licet, cum non sit *ιδίας ἐπιλύσεως*, propriæ interpretationis, 2 Pet. i. 20. Non sufficit ad typum constituendum nuda convenientia, quæ inter res, personas, et eventus plurimos a nobis observari potest, sed oportet nobis amplius constet de divino consilio quo rem similem servire voluerit alteri præsignificandæ, cogitationibusque nostris illuc ducendis.’

But all such objections, with all those others which it would only be too easy to make, might indeed be set aside or overborne, if any marvellous coincidence between these Epistles and the after course of the Church’s development could be made out; if history set its seal to these, and attested that they were prophecy indeed; for when a key fits perfectly well the wards of a very complicated lock, and opens it without an effort, it is difficult not to believe that they were made for one another. But there is no such accurate correspondence here; as is abundantly testified by the fact that the interpreters of the historico-prophetical school, besides their controversy with those who deny *in toto* what they affirm, have also an intestine strife among themselves. Each one has his own solution of the enigma, his own distribution of the several epochs; or, if this is too much to affirm, there is, at any rate, nothing approaching to a general *consensus* among them. Take, for instance, the distribution of Vitringa. For him Ephesus represents the condition of the Church from the day of Pentecost to the outbreak of the Decian persecution; Smyrna, from the Decian persecution to that of Diocletian, both inclusive; Pergamum, from the time of Constantine until the close of the seventh century; Thyatira, the Church in its mission to the nations during the

first half of the Middle Ages; Sardis, from the close of the twelfth century to the Reformation; Philadelphia, the first century of the Reformation; Laodicea, the Reformed Church at the time when he was writing. Lange, *Das Apostolische Zeitalter*, vol. ii. p. 472, has a nearly similar distribution.

There are two or three fortunate coincidences here between the assumed prophecy and the fact; without such indeed the whole notion must have been abandoned long ago as hopeless; such coincidences could scarcely have been avoided. Smyrna, for instance, represents excellently well the *Ecclesia pressa* in its two last and most terrible struggles with heathen Rome; so too for such Protestant expositors as see the Papacy in the scarlet woman of Babylon, the Jezebel of Thyatira appears exactly at the right time, coincides with the Papacy at its height, yet at the same time with judgment at the door in the great revolt which was even then preparing. But I would ask any one fairly grounded in the subject whether there is any true *articulation* of Church history in the distribution above made? any general felicity of correspondence between what are averred to be the prophetic outlines and the historic realities adduced as fulfilling them? Take, for instance, Philadelphia, as representing the Reformation period. The praise bestowed on the Philadelphian Angel may be said to culminate in these words, '*Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*' (iii. 8). Was this the fact? Can anything, on the contrary, have been more mournful than the way in which, when '*an open door*' was set before the Reformers, they suffered it to so great an extent to be closed on them again? There was a time, some five and twenty or thirty years after Luther had begun to preach, when Austria

and Bavaria and Styria and Poland, and, in good part, France, had all been won for the Reformation. Thirty years more had not elapsed when they all were lost again ; and it was confined within the far narrower limits which it occupies at the present day (see Ranke, *History of the Popes in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*)—this door, once open, having been closed mainly through the guilt of those contests, very far from *Philadelphian* (for the names too have been pressed into service), among the Reformers themselves.

Then, again, other interpreters, as I have already observed, distribute the epochs according to schemes altogether diverse from this. Thus it is far more common among the Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century to apportion, not five Churches, but only the first four, to the pre-Reformation period ; to claim, as Brightman does, Philadelphia, with all its graces, for themselves, and, as must necessarily follow, to contemplate Sardis as representing the Church of the actual Reformation. Certainly the Reformation had blots and blemishes enough ; but its faults were those of zeal and passion ; they had nothing in common with that hypocritical form of godliness, that death under shows of life, imputed to Sardis ; and any dutiful child of the Reformation, who at all felt the immense debt of gratitude which he and the whole Church owed to it, notwithstanding all its excesses and all its shortcomings, might reasonably hesitate long as to the accuracy of a scheme which should brand it with this dishonour. See Marckius, *Præf.* § 55 ; and on the other hand as saying, and saying well, whatever there is to be said in support of the historico-prophetical school in this particular aspect, see Henry More, at p. 756 sqq., in his treatise already referred to.

Much more might be urged on the arbitrary artificial character of all the attempted adaptations of Church history to these Epistles ; but this Essay has already run to a greater length than I intended ; and indeed it is not needful to say more. Where there were no preëstablished harmonies in the Divine intention between the one and the other, as I am persuaded that here there were none, it could not have been otherwise. The multitude of dissertations, essays, books, which have been, and are still being written, in support of this scheme of interpretation, must remain a singular monument of wasted ingenuity and misapplied toil ; and, in their entire failure to prove their point, of the disappointment which must result from a futile looking into Scripture for that which is not to be found there,—from an attempt to draw out from it that which he who draws out must first himself have put in. Men will never in this way make Scripture richer. They will have made it much poorer for themselves, if they nourish themselves from it with the fancies of men, their own fancies or those of others, instead of with the truths of God.

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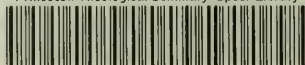
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